

**THE MARKETPLACE AS HYBRID SPACE:
RE-READING BARABAZAAR AND THE CITY**



A Thesis submitted by
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ABSTRACT

More often than not, former colonial cities like Kolkata (Calcutta) have been analysed in ways that reinforce an essentialising colonial discourse, using un-interrogated colonial sources, which rarely reveal the contradictions and disruptions integral to the whole 'messy' and 'dirty' historical process. A potential antidote to such essentialism is hybridity theory, which although having undergone some extensive re-interpretations has become a key concept within the field of postcolonial studies. Within the context of India, the work of Homi K. Bhabha is routinely cited as authorising such hybrid identities. Bhabha's idea of hybridity suggests an approach to reading place that understands the overlapping geographies, both indigenous and foreign, and mixed narratives of the past and present day, that were and are constantly negotiated.

However, much postcolonial theory is saturated with a spatialised language which usually functions in the 'abstract.' This thesis seeks to move beyond the spatial rhetoric of colonial and postcolonial theory and return it to more 'real' geographies. It is concerned with showing how the materiality of place and the more imaginary world of theory were and are fundamental parts of colonial and postcolonial formations in the past and present day. Thus this PhD seeks to bring together Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity, with particular places in a 'traditional' market area in Kolkata, called Barabazaar.

Barabazaar was chosen as an empirical focus for this thesis, because it seemed an appropriate 'laboratory' to test Bhabha's ideas on cultural hybridity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'intentional hybrid,' which itself is rooted in Bakhtin's writings on the marketplace. The 'traditional' marketplace is the epitome of local identity and often it is what defined a place as more significant than surrounding communities. Perhaps of more importance is the unsettling of that identity by the trade and traffic of goods from elsewhere that defined the market as a site of 'hybrid' meanings.

A qualitative research strategy informed by hybrid ethnographic research techniques was adopted. Following literature searches in the United Kingdom and India, four trips were made to Kolkata to complete the fieldwork in Barabazaar, as follows: detailed analysis of building uses and trading patterns; mapping and photographing over 200 courtyard houses; detailed measured surveys of six courtyard houses, and semi-structured taped interviews with their owners; a survey of China Bazaar; semi-structured taped interviews with a number of paper traders.

In order to give a more grounded understanding of hybridity, I focus on a number of research themes in Barabazaar, including: the construction of a largely colonial 'urban history of Kolkata,' and the formation of an intertwined 'hybrid' narrative of health and modernity; the 'hybrid' vision that Sir Patrick Geddes adopted for proposals for Barabazaar, in 1919; the 'hybrid' sense of space found in the courtyard houses of Barabazaar; and, the culture of the street and bazaar as a paradigmatic example of 'hybrid' outside space. In this context, this thesis deals with both present day lives of people who live and/or work in Barabazaar, and their urban histories that they are inevitably and intimately connected to.

The conclusion explores the context of hybridity in this thesis, and makes connections between the various chapters of this thesis. I build on these hybrid narratives outlining the multifocused sense of place we are left with, providing a number of open-ended conclusions, as follows: firstly, a view of history borrowed from Dipesh Chakrabarty, called 'Provincialising Europe'; secondly, Bhabha's notion of 'hybrid communities,' and 'partial' cultures; and, thirdly, a more mobile and reconfigured sense of place. I conclude by reflecting on a future architectural research agenda of hybrid urbanism.

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PREFACE

Some Thoughts on Motivation

The beginnings of cities are always fragile and indefinable moments. Equally so, are the beginnings of stories like this one. How I came to write this thesis, and why I became interested in Kolkata and Barabazaar in particular, is a long and convoluted story with numerous false-starts, and several points of origin. For me, there was no definite beginning and when I first started thinking about this PhD seriously in the summer of 1998, Kolkata was vivid in my memory for all sorts of reasons.

I first went to Kolkata in early 1993, whilst backpacking through India and immediately, wanted to leave. I was travelling with a friend and hoping to get a cheap flight from Kolkata to Bangkok. Within hours of arrival, my friend had collapsed in the street, the cause later diagnosed as amoebic dysentery. This may seem like a dramatic event, but in the context of budget hotels, street food, and regular upset stomachs, it all seemed perfectly ordinary. I spent five weeks waiting for him to recover in a Kolkata hospital and my relationship with Kolkata had begun.

Kolkata was a turning point for me. Looking back, Kolkata had worried, unsettled, and fascinated me all at the same time. As a newly graduated architect in 1990, I had simply wanted to build buildings, as many as possible. Just before arriving in India, this initial enthusiasm had begun to wane and I became more interested in theoretical questions of how to build. After visiting Kolkata, and on reflection, I began to wonder if it was ever going to be possible to build again. Visiting Kolkata had made me realise some of the inadequacies of much Western architectural and urban theory in interpreting cities with very different cultural origins and reference points to our own. I began to wonder, how it was possible to map a culture whose own references (on the face of it at least) do not correspond to ours?

At the beginning of a project such as this, it is often easy to agonise self-indulgently about one's motives and be accused of navel gazing. However whilst in Kolkata, it was never enough to say to people I met that the reason I was there was to simply complete my PhD. In the context of Kolkata with its lack of material resources one is constantly reminded of the need to neither waste time nor sentiment and remain pragmatic. Equally, when one realises what a hard slog an undertaking like this is, the long term commitment that is required, the sacrifices that are made in one's personal life, and the difficulties in communication, a project like this could not succeed without a certain amount of idealism and naive optimism. It was this tension, one of many, between the everyday realism of the city and my own curiosity to learn that seemed so often to frame my motives.

Initially, when I first arrived in Kolkata and people asked me why I was interested in this subject, I told them somewhat romantically it was because Barabazaar was an area where a lot of different groups of people had lived, moved on and then others replaced them. It was this mix of people that first attracted me to the area. As Mr. Indra Kumar Kathotia, a market trader, said, "ah yes, this is a very cosmopolitan area, everyone is living in harmony". As I later discovered, and like so many places, some lived more harmoniously than others.

Whilst in Kolkata, often my motives were accepted unquestioningly, however, some people were more sceptical. What was the point of this work and who was going to be interested in it? Was I just there to further my career and finish a PhD? Why was I so interested in courtyard houses, a type of house and a way of life that was seemingly almost extinct? Why was I so interested in Barabazaar the most overcrowded part of an overcrowded city? Why was I so interested in Kolkata, a crumbling, decaying developing world city with little influence outside the region of West Bengal. Of course, whilst these views may be clichés about the city of Kolkata there was an element of truth to them that I rarely found easy to deny.

The reason I mention this is that my choice of Kolkata and Barabazaar as a site for a PhD was intensely personal and as such this thesis is a personal and idiosyncratic experience of the city. There is as much ambiguity, as certainty to my positioning. As a white British male I am marked as a member of the culture of colonisation, a status that some might see as

problematizing my engagement with Barabazaar. However, in reality I was received not only as coloniser, but amongst other things as backpacker, tourist, charity worker, friend, (relatively) wealthy westerner, and academic. Some were just interested in me, because I was interested in them.

Manish Chakravorty, an architect, said that if he were in my position (meaning, as he put it so bluntly, “coming from ‘the west’ with money”) he would be making linkages between various developing world cities. He seemed to understand rather pragmatically that there were certain things that it was easier for him to do, and there were other things that it was easier for me to do. Equally, what this highlights is the privilege of my own position and how my work is enmeshed in a world of enduring power inequalities. Perhaps collaboration is the way forward. As with all collaborations a certain ‘generosity of spirit’ and tolerance for the ‘others’ motives is required on both sides. In the end I would say that I wanted to learn about the lives of people very different from my own. Often, simple curiosity became the form of motivation that raised the fewest and least difficult questions.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"We are all backwoodsmen and barbarians together - we others dwelling beyond the Ditch, in the outer darkness of the Mofussil. There are no such things as Commissioners and heads of departments in the world, and there is only one city in India. . . Let us take our hats off to Calcutta, the many sided, the smoky, the magnificent, as we drive in over the Hugli Bridge in the dawn of a still February morning. We have left India behind us at Howrah Station, and now we enter foreign parts. No, not wholly foreign. Say rather too familiar."

Rudyard Kipling, *City of Dreadful Night*, from, *From Sea to Sea and other Sketches*, *Letters of Travel*, Volume II, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1927, p. 201

Chapter Summary

I begin by stating the problem that the body of knowledge we call the 'urban history of Kolkata' is largely an imperial history constructed by the British colonial enterprise within an essentialist framework of binary oppositions. I briefly explain the interlinked fields of postcolonialism and postmodernism and their influence on thinking in other disciplines, including architecture, before outlining Homi K. Bhabha's idea of hybridity theory, which is viewed by some as an antidote to essentialism. I argue for the need to ground such theory in specific places and introduce the empirical focus of this thesis, namely a 'traditional' market area situated to the north of the centre of Kolkata, called 'Barabazaar.' After describing the key objectives of this thesis, which are developed in subsequent chapters, I conclude by explaining the background and organisation of the study.

Statement of the Problem: Imperialism, Colonialism and Binary Thought

Edward Said's seminal text *Orientalism*, established a field of studies alert to the 'culture' of imperialism and colonialism.¹ Said's most influential argument was that, Orientalism needed to be understood, "as a discourse . . . by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."² Said charted the complicity of western literary and academic knowledge with the history of European colonialism, emphasising the way in which seemingly impartial, objective academic disciplines have colluded with, and indeed been instrumental in, the production of actual forms of colonial subjugation and administration. According to Said, from the end of the eighteenth century, and as a, "result of cultural hegemony at work," there emerged,

"a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about

¹ Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978

² *ibid.*, p. 3

mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character.”³

Thus fuelled by interests within the British colonial enterprise, a vast body of textual and visual representations of India was produced during the last two centuries of colonial rule. This body of knowledge, constituting the mainstay of British Orientalism, primarily addressed a European audience, spoke for the Indian, and claimed to represent the authentic India.⁴ This material supposedly uncovered an essential difference between the materialistic, rational, progressive West and a spiritual, irrational, and static India. Social constructs of Self and Other provided the fundamental building blocks for the hierarchies of power which produced empires and the uneven relations among their citizenry. Under colonialism, inferior constructions of the colonised Other established certain structures of domination through which the coloniser triumphed. Jane M. Jacobs, in *Edge of Empire* claims that, “such metropolitan constructs of Self and Other were integral to the territorial, military, political and economic extensions of European power across the globe, the process known as colonialism and imperialism.”⁵

Although colonial dominance produced this East-West construct, this binary opposition was made to appear to pre-date the colonial relationship, and thus the civilising mission became the justification for British rule. Scientific and legal theories of social evolution gave British expansion across the world a ‘natural’ logic. The world, in evolutionary terms was inhabited by ‘advanced’ and ‘backward’ peoples. Said notes in *Orientalism*, John Westlake’s *Chapters on the Principles of International Law* (1894) advised that the ‘uncivilised’ sections of the globe should be annexed and occupied by the ‘civilised’ and advanced powers.⁶ Such racialised social constructs provided the ‘justification’ for social relations under colonialism.

³ *ibid.*, p. 7

⁴ Edward Said’s ideas have been developed in the Indian context by: Mark Crinson, *Empire Building, Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996; and Richard Cronin, *Imagining India*, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989

⁵ Jacobs, Jane M., *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p.13

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p.207

One of the key problems of Kolkata's urban literature is the uncritical acceptance of British sources and the resultant re-circulation of the colonisers' ideas about the city and its people. The standard 'urban history of Kolkata,' cites colonial buildings and monuments such as the New Court House, Government House, the Writers' Building, and the Town Hall, which have become markers on an imperial domain illustrating the growth of Kolkata as a British city (figures 1.1 - 1.4). Nineteenth and twentieth century urban histories of Kolkata have relied heavily upon European sources, particularly on 18th and 19th century accounts of British administrators.⁷ By and large, the grand historical narrative was constructed by the British, largely for their own purposes, omitting the everyday histories and experiences of ordinary people in Kolkata. As Swati Chattopadhyay points out, "it is a narrative of heroic British efforts to build a city in the marshes of Bengal, in the face of native hostility, amidst festering jungles and tropical heat."⁸ The story rarely revealed contradictions and disruptions integral to the historical experience, and in so doing left out anything that did not fit; what Chattopadhyay has called, the "chaos-leads-to-order narrative."⁹

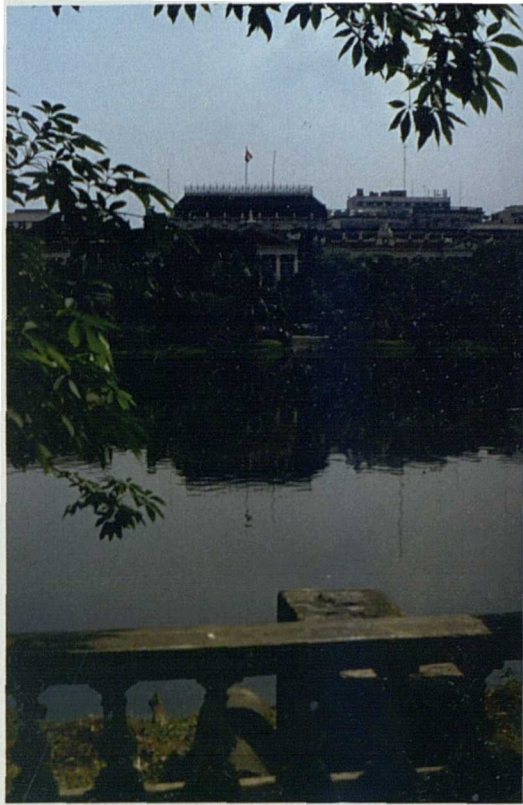
Chattopadhyay states that, "any serious attention to the historical evidence of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Bengal cannot fail to illustrate the precarious situation of

⁷ The colonial history of Calcutta written by British authors during the nineteenth century, includes the following: Reverend James Long, *Calcutta in the Olden Time - Its Localities*, 1852, and, *Calcutta in the Olden Time - Its People*, 1860, and, *Peeps into Social Life in Calcutta a Century Ago*, Calcutta, 1868, and, *Selections From Unpublished Records of Government for the Years 1748 to 1767 inclusive Relating Mainly to the Social Condition of Bengal, with a map of Calcutta in 1784*, Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1869; James H. Rainey, *A Historical and Topographical Sketch of Calcutta*, 'Englishman' Press, Calcutta, 1876; Henry Barry Hyde, *Parish of Bengal 1678-1788*, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1899, and *Parochial Annals of Bengal. Being a History of the Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment of the Honourable East India Company in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Calcutta, 1901

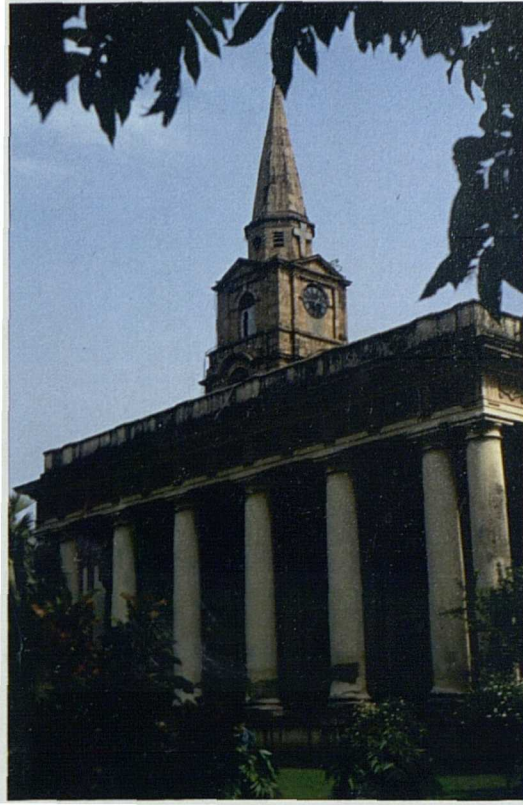
British authors from the early twentieth century, includes the following: A. K. Ray, *A Short History of Calcutta: Town and Suburbs*, introduction by Nisith R. Ray, (1901 Reprint) Riddhi, Calcutta, 1982; Katherine Blechynden, *Calcutta Past and Present*, Spink and Co., London, 1905; W. H. Carey, *The Good Old Days of John Company, being Curious Reminiscences Illustrating Names and Customs of the East India Company 1600-1858*, R. Cambrey and Co., 1906-1907, Calcutta; Sir Harry Evan Auguste Cotton, *Calcutta Old and New; A Historical and Descriptive Handbook to the City*, W. Newman and Co., Calcutta, 1907 ; H. E. Busteed, *Echoes From Old Calcutta, Being Chiefly Reminiscences of the Days of Warren Hastings, Francis and Impey*, Fourth Edition, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1908

⁸ Chattopadhyay, Swati, *Depicting Calcutta*, PhD in Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1997, p. xix

⁹ *ibid.*, p. xxii



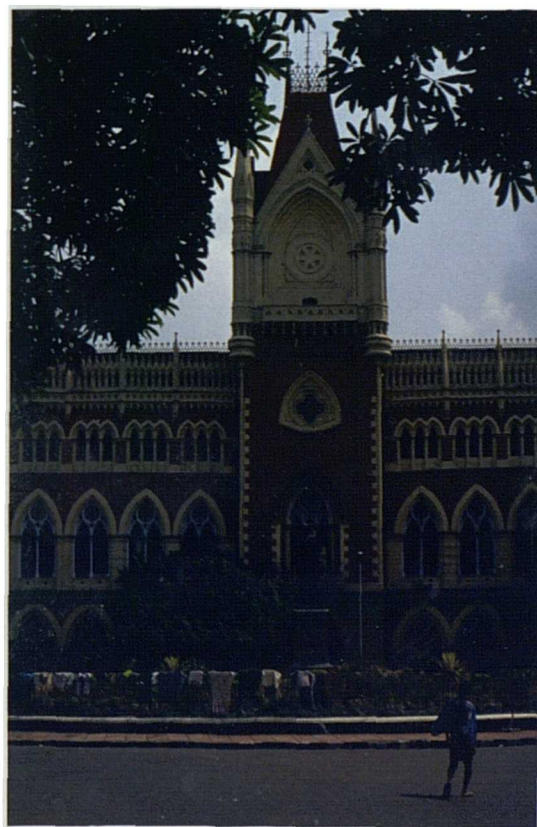
1.1. Writers Building (1882)
Photographed August 2000



1.2. St. Johns Church (1787)
Photographed August 2000



1.3. Metcalfe Hall (1884)
Photographed August 2000



1.4. High Court Building (1864-72)
Photographed August 2000

the British East India Company during this time.”¹⁰ J. P. Losty in, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, describes a world where, “English factors indulged in private trade to the detriment of the Company, or who systematically filched from the Company’s warehouses, from Indian traders and workmen depending on them, or worst of all (in the Company’s eyes) who traded clandestinely with the various interlopers or traders who were trying to break the monopoly of the London Company at this time.”¹¹ The contributors to this story were historians as well as administrators who were involved in the conflicts, writing after British control had been somewhat consolidated. Chattopadhyay goes on to say that, “not only were the complex choices and decisions made by the British and Indians simplified into a British winning strategy, the enormous contribution and resistance of the native population during the entire duration of colonial rule is effectively subdued as part of the city’s history.”¹²

In Kolkata, these essential differences between East and West can be clearly seen in the city and are illustrated by the racial division of the ‘black’ and ‘white’ towns.¹³ Historians tell us that during the eighteenth century a ‘white’ town developed in and around Fort William (figure 1.5). In 1698, permission was obtained from the Nawab Azim ash-Shan (in consideration of a gift of 16,000 rupees) to purchase the right of renting the three villages of Sutanuti, Kalikata and Gobindapur.¹⁴ In 1699, the English settlement of Kolkata was given the status of a ‘Presidency’ under its first Governor Sir Charles Eyre and the construction of a fort (old Fort William) was begun on the bank of the Hooghly (on the Eastern side of the present day Strand Road). The European town began to grow around the fort which was completed in 1712 (figure 1.6). Kolkata in the early 18th century thus consisted of four parts, which from north to south were; Sutanuti, a cotton and cloth market; Bazaar Kalikata or Barabazaar, a traditional Indian market; Kalikata, where the Europeans largely lived; and, Gobindapore, an Indian village. The area covered was about three miles long by a quarter-mile wide and

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Losty, J. P., *Calcutta City of Palaces, A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company 1690-1858*, The British Library Board, London, 1990, p. 14

¹² *ibid.*, p. xxiii

¹³ According to Partha Mitter, in, ‘The Early British Port Cities of India: Their Planning and Architecture Circa 1640-1757,’ *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, June 1986, “In Madras this segregation was formalized in 1661 by a dividing wall . . . On the other hand, no such distinction could be enforced in Bombay. Because Bombay consisted of a discontinuous series of islands, European and Indian populations were scattered all over the city,” p. 102

¹⁴ Losty, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, p. 17



1.5. View of the 'white' town

Sir Charles d'Oyly, *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*, 'Calcutta from the Old Course,'
Lithographed and Published by Dickinson and Co., London, 1848
By Permission of the British Library, X666



1.6. George Lambert (attributed), Fort William from the land side, with St Anne's Church, c. 1730, Mafarge Assets Corp.

Source: Losty, J. P., *Calcutta city of Palaces, A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company 1690-1858*, The British Library Board, London, 1990, p. 13

surrounded by smaller hamlets forming a varied range of agricultural and fishing settlements.¹⁵

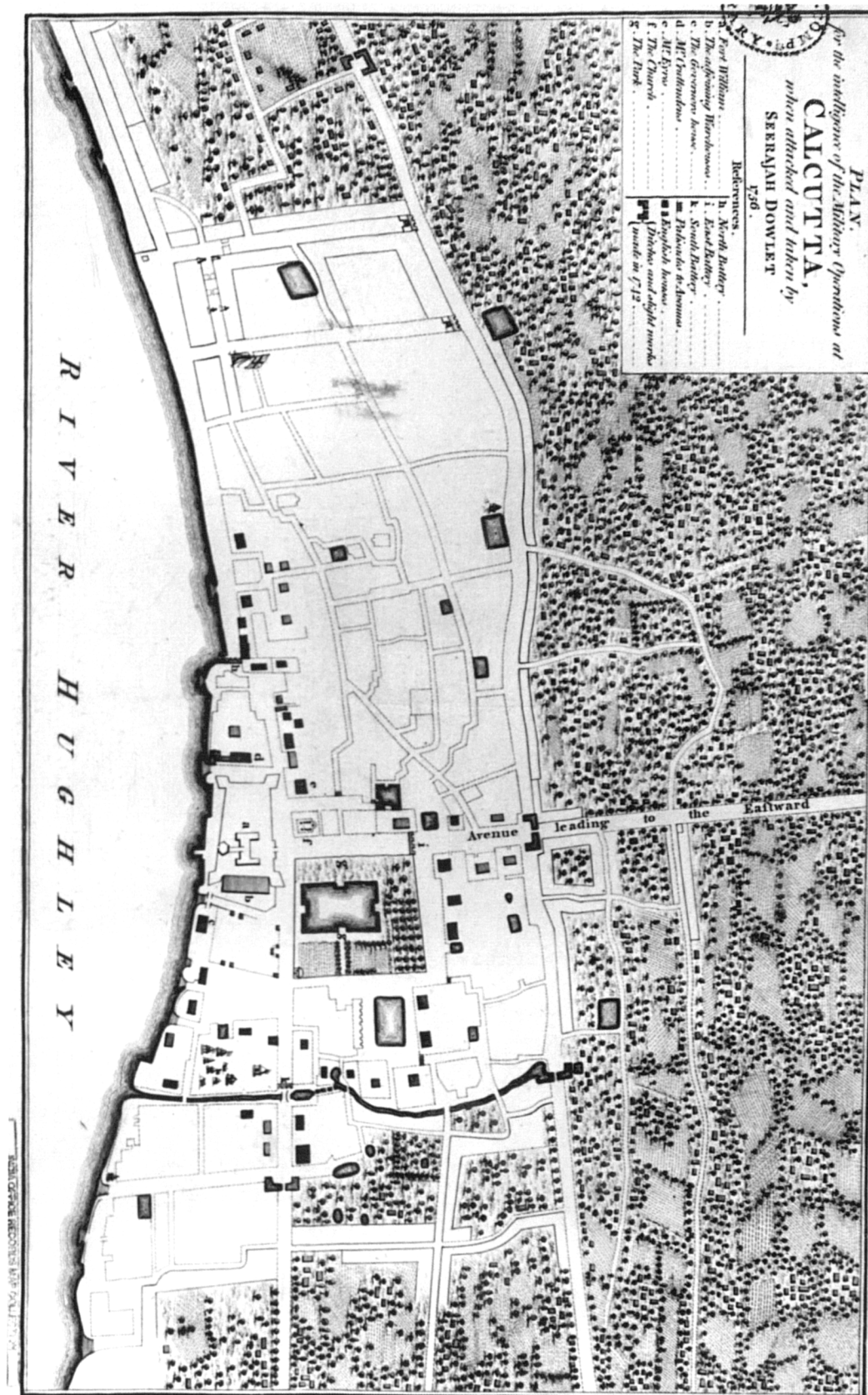
Following the capture of Kolkata by Siraj ud-Daula in June 1756, and its subsequent recapture by Colonel Robert Clive on 2 January 1757, work began on the new Fort William in August of that year. The fort was funded by loot from the battle of Plassey.¹⁶ The site of the new fort was the village of Gobindapur and Nabakrishna Deb and other residents of Gobindapur including the Seths received compensatory land in the Barabazaar-Sutanuti area. With a view to obtaining a free view of the firing space around the fort, the jungles and marshy lands of the intervening space from Gobindapur to Chowringee were cleared.¹⁷ The Fort was completed around 1773. The southerly location of the new fort and the shifting of the original population from Gobindapur to Sutanuti reinforced the southward thrust of the more organised part of the city. The inevitable corollary followed: the city turned its back to the north, including Chitpur, Sutanuti and part of Kalikata itself. The racial division was sealed by a gradual withdrawal of the English from Barabazaar-Sutanuti area, as the European colonial city turned to the south (figure 1.7).

However, such racialised constructs were never stable and were always threatened not only by the unpredictability of the Other but also the uncertain homogeneity and boundedness of the Self. Chattopadhyay has argued that, these European and Indian settlements were far from autonomous black and white landscapes, and that the economic, political and social conditions of colonial culture penetrated the insularity of both towns:

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 22

¹⁶ As part of the deal it was proposed to elevate Siraj ud-Daula's uncle Mir Jafir to the position of Nawab. In return money was to be paid to the Company and to individuals who had suffered at the sack of Calcutta, to the amount of one Crore, 77 lacks of Rupees (£1 3/4 million) plus further donations to the armed forces of another £1/2 million and similar ones to the secret committee of the English leaders (Clive, Watts, Drake). In addition to the money, the treaty with Mir Jafar specified all the Company's trading privileges, the complete exclusion of the French from trading in Bengal, and increases in the company's Zamindari land (Source: Losty, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, p. 33).

¹⁷ Thus came into being the 'Maidan,' an area of parkland still unbuilt on in present day Kolkata. For a contested history of this space, refer to: Helen Thomas, 'Stories of Plain Territory: The Maiden, Calcutta,' in, *The Unknown City Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell with Alicia Pivaro (eds.), MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., USA, London, 2001, pp. 138-158



1.7. Early development of Kolkata. The 'white town' is south of the main E-W axis leading from Fort William (a), the 'black town' is north of the main E-W axis.

Plan for the Intelligence of the military Operations at Calcutta, 1756

By Permission of the British Library, X1206/1

“The dependence on natives for services made the most intimate spaces of European residences accessible to the natives - a transparent world where natives moved in and out with food, clothes, and orders. Similarly, the opaqueness of the native town was infiltrated by the administrative arms of the British government - the census and the police.”¹⁸

In colonial Kolkata, in the formation of the ‘Black’ and ‘White’ towns, what is apparent is that this position of colonial space was repeatedly disrupted and transgressed - the drawing of such racial lines shifted with time and so-called European and Indian enclaves never remained homogenous. In reality the city always consisted of overlapping geographies and conceptions of space and territory, both indigenous and foreign, that were constantly negotiated.

In summary, the body of knowledge we call the ‘urban history of Kolkata’ is largely an imperial history constructed by the British colonial enterprise within a framework of binary oppositions. This oppositional thinking leads to discourse that perpetuates the binary oppositions of ‘self’ versus ‘other,’ ‘us’ versus ‘them,’ coloniser’ versus ‘colonised,’ ‘core’ versus ‘periphery,’ and does not allow for alternative ways of thinking. Not surprisingly, in most of the pertinent literature, these essential categories remain uncontested and, more problematically, the colonial sources are not interrogated for their motivation and point of view. How then is it possible to re-read such texts and re-construct an urban history that avoids such polarisation? What has been the role of space in colonial and postcolonial projects and how might we re-think particular places of the city in these terms?

Postcolonial and Postmodern Space

Partly because of the ideological and material structures of power established under colonialism that I have described in the previous section, the study of postcolonialism has

¹⁸ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. xxv

attracted unprecedented academic attention.¹⁹ The emphasis of much of this new work is decidedly cultural, emerging as it does from literary studies, and cultural geography, but its effect has reached into a wide range of disciplinary fields, including architecture.²⁰ Indeed, from the very beginnings of colonial encounters to the present day, there have been counter-colonial movements and outcomes which have unsettled colonialism. Whilst questioning the extent to which it is possible to define postcolonialism, it is often regarded as the need, in nations or groups which have been victims of imperialism and colonialism to achieve an identity uncontaminated by universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images.

Gyan Prakash describes postcolonial criticism as critiquing the, “historicism that projected the West as History,” where Europe is a theoretical subject.²¹ In his analysis of subaltern studies as postcolonial criticism, Prakash suggests that postcolonial critique, “does not enjoy a panoptic distance from colonial history but exists as an aftermath, as an after - after being worked over by colonialism.”²² Postcolonial theory foregrounds the legacy of Enlightenment and modernity to underscore the significance that this legacy has had for constructing the conceptual foundations of Western thought. As Padmini Mongia asserts, “attempting to dismantle Enlightenment certainties, postcolonial theory acknowledges their continuing and residual power.”²³ Jane M. Jacobs in, *Edge of Empire*, explains the notion of postcolonialism further:

“Postcolonial studies highlight the ways colonial cultures of power and domination never fully realise themselves. They are always anxiously regrouping, reinventing, and reinscribing their authority against the challenge of anti-colonial formations but also against their own internal instability. This

¹⁹ For an overview of this discussion, refer to: Padmini Mongia (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory A Reader*, Arnold, London and New York, 1996; and, Peggy Ochoa, ‘The Historical Moments of Postcolonial Writing: Beyond Colonialism’s Binary,’ *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 15, Fall, 1996, pp. 221-229

²⁰ For a summary of these debates, refer to: Sophie Watson, and Catherine Gibson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA, 1995

²¹ Prakash, Gyan, ‘Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,’ *American Historical Review* 99.5, no. 1, December 1994, p. 1475, quoted in , Mongia, Padmini (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory A Reader*, Arnold, London and New York, 1996, p. 5

²² *ibid.*

²³ Mongia, *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, p. 6

is not to say that imperialism does not take hold and create most emphatically material and uneven geographies.”²⁴

Williams and Chrisman note that the much debated relationship between postcolonialism and postmodernism also requires, “lengthy and careful delineation.”²⁵ The nexus is of particular relevance to this thesis which takes as its empirical focus not only the colonial past but an urban present which is so often read as a paradigmatic site of the, “condition of postmodernity.”²⁶ There is little doubt that postcolonial theoretical revisions have productively cross-fertilised with postmodern theory. Clearly postmodernism is a term that defies easy definition. Postmodernism is often understood in opposition to modernism, as a corrective movement that comes after or post, modernism. Not all, however, would accept this temporal distinction between modernism and postmodernism. Neil Leach in, *Rethinking Architecture*, claims, “critics such as Hal Foster have detected two seemingly contradictory strains in postmodernism, a postmodernism of reaction which repudiates modernism and celebrates the status quo, and a postmodernism of resistance that attempts to continue the project of modernism while subjecting it to critical re-evaluation.”²⁷ Edward Soja in, ‘Postmodern Urbanisation: The Six Restructurings of Los Angeles,’ explains the now familiar expressions of this postmodern theory:

“the critique of totalizing discourses, master narratives, essentialism; the exposure of critical silences in modernist texts and practices; the reconceptualisation and reassertion of difference and otherness, especially in the criss-crossing contexts of gender, race and class; the crisis of representation and dissolution of the expected relationship between signifier and signified; the growing interest in hyperreality, hyperspace, simulations,

²⁴ Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 14

²⁵ Williams, P. and Chrisman, L., ‘Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: an Introduction,’ in, Williams, P. and Chrisman, L. (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory A Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, pp. 1-26, p. 13, 14

²⁶ Refer to; Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, Verso, London, 1989; and David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989

²⁷ Leach, Neil (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture a Reader in Cultural Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 207

simulacra in shaping everyday life; the rise of a new cultural politics of identity and radical subjectivity, etc..²⁸

As theories, postmodernism and postcolonialism appear to be similar, with postcolonialism perhaps distinguishing itself by the primary concern it has with the process associated with the condition called colonialism, as feminism has with patriarchy. Postmodern theory like postcolonialism is not without its critics. Some have argued that counter-colonial and non-metropolitan cultural productions have been appropriated into postmodernist deconstructions of western hegemony.²⁹ This suggests that a postmodern sensitivity to difference is simply another form of Eurocentric expansionism in which the experiences and cultural productions of the marginalised now become a means by which the core understands and/or deconstructs itself. Gayatri Spivak elaborates a version of this contradiction in her essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'³⁰ Spivak's complaint about poststructuralist theory is not simply that it makes use of Otherness in its own interests. She also complains that poststructuralism's aversion to grand narratives means that it is incapable of dealing with something as bold as global capitalism, something she still considers vital to understanding the nature of power and privilege in the postmodern world.

Paradoxically, for India, the process of decolonisation and its independence in 1947, is perhaps the least meaningful signifier of what might be thought of as postcoloniality. Whilst it is tempting to think of the present as somehow already postcolonial, this 'postcoloniality', as the term itself suggests, is often deeply entwined within colonial formations. During suggests that postcolonialism denies the ongoing efficacy of imperial structures of power - the way in which the imperial desires (past and present) are in the here and now.³¹ The aftermath of colonialism and partition in particular, continues to inflict itself on India. The mass migration of

²⁸ Soja, Edward, 'Postmodern Urbanization: The Six Restructurings of Los Angeles,' in, *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, edited by Sophie Watson and Catherine Gibson, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA, 1995, pp. 125-137, p. 127

²⁹ Refer to: I. Adam, and H. Tiffin (eds.), *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, p. viii

³⁰ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?,' in, Nelson, C., and Grossberg, L. (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271-313

³¹ During, Simon, 'Postcolonialism and Globalisation,' *Meanjin*, vol. 51, no. 2, 1992, pp 339-353, p. 340

displaced populations to Kolkata is a critical factor which continues to blight the city's development, today.³²

Frankenberg and Mani suggest that the term postcolonialism necessarily and problematically has globalising tendencies.³³ They question the way in which the term is so closely linked to the writings of "first-generation diasporic intellectuals," so that the experiences of those writers have come to stand for the nature of postcoloniality across a diverse range of settings. The real problem with the term postcolonialism is perhaps better diagnosed by Anne McClintock who argues that it generalises diverse histories and links them once again, even if in counterflow, to the European core.³⁴ Somehow, it is hard to imagine a space that is not somehow touched by colonialism or, for that matter, to imagine cultures that are not somehow constituted out of their necessary positioning in the modern. McClintock argues that the intent of postcolonial theory is to challenge the logic of linear, "development," and its, "entourage of binaries." But she also points out the fact that the term postcolonial paradoxically re-establishes a binary orientation, a return of the colonial. The term postcolonialism is, "haunted by the logic of western historicism and while it, "heralds the end of a world era," it does so, "within the same trope of liner progress that animated that era."³⁵

I do not want to suggest a grim entrapment in colonial formations past and present. However, the 'postcolonial spaces' described hereafter do not always neatly counter colonialism's residual and revived formations. I do not wish to deny the possibility of opposition but instead suggest that it is one articulation of many which upsets or slips outside of colonialism. The colonised engage not only in resistance but also in complicity, conciliation, even blithe disregard. Nostalgia often defines the colonised as always engaged in conscious work against the 'core.' Rather than the prescriptive definitions of what does or does not constitute

³² First there was the immediate post-independence influx of refugees from East Pakistan; then a second wave of refugees in 1951, when riots took place in Dacca and Narayangunge protesting against the East Pakistan communists government; finally a third wave of refugees following the 1971 Bangladeshi war.

³³ Frankenberg, R. and Mani, L., 'Crosscurrents, crosstalk: race, 'postcoloniality' and the Politics of Location,' *Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1993, pp. 292-310, p. 295

³⁴ McClintock, Anne, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term 'Post-colonialism,' *Social Text*, vol. 10, no. 2, 3, 1992, pp. 84-98, p. 86

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 85

postcolonial theory, I find it more useful to explore and interrogate the arguments of different positions, to see contemporary postcolonial theory as a, “sign that should be interrogated, a locus of contradictions.”³⁶ The cultural and spatial processes I hope to describe in this thesis show the anxious tenacity of colonialist tendencies as well as pointing to more hybrid formations of colonial and postcolonial spaces.

Hybridity Theory

Within the field of postcolonial studies, hybridity theory has become a key concept, which although having undergone some extensive re-interpretations, is seen as a potential antidote to essentialism. Within the context of India, the work of Homi K. Bhabha is routinely cited as authorising such hybrid identities. Bhabha in his seminal book, *The Location of Culture*, made a crucial and necessary intervention when he suggested a limitation in Said’s account of Orientalism, notably that, “there is always . . . the suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser”.³⁷ In response, Bhabha proposed that the effort of orientalising must always fail since the colonial subject is constructed in, “a repertoire of conflictual positions”; these render him or her, “the site of both fixity and fantasy” in a process which cannot but be uneven, divided, incomplete, and therefore potentially resistant.³⁸ As Gillian Rose states, “His project is to diagnose the textual construction of colonialism and, at the same time, to argue that colonialism contains its own failure within itself.”³⁹ Bhabha argues for a theoretical position which escapes the polarities of ‘east’ and ‘west,’ ‘self’ and ‘other,’ ‘master’ and ‘slave,’ a position, “which overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity.”⁴⁰

³⁶ Carby, Hazel, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, p. 15, quoted in, Mongia, Padmini (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory A Reader*, Arnold, London and New York, 1996, p. 3

³⁷ Bhabha, Homi, ‘Difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism,’ in, *The Politics of Theory*, Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds.), University of Essex, Essex, 1983, p. 200, quoted in, Easthope, Anthony, ‘Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity,’ *Textual Practice*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1998, pp. 341-348, p. 341

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Rose, Gillian, ‘The Interstitial Perspective: A Review Essay on Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 13, 1995, pp. 365-373, p. 365

⁴⁰ H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p. 25

The non-hybridic has two related features. One is the commitment to 'unitary' or 'original' identity, represented by the supposedly transcendental ego. Described by Descartes, this notion of the subject supposes that thinking is to be equated with being and that its very essence is an undivided, self-controlling self-consciousness. For Bhabha this Cartesian concept of subjectivity is at the very centre of a Western, Eurocentric definition of culture, and necessary support for it. Anthony Easthope describes it more fully:

"One might be tempted to think of this Eurocentricism as white and male, but Bhabha avoids the risk of essentialism attaching to such terms; instead . . . , he argues that it is the enemy who claims essence, unity and singleness of identity - so that everything that might be mobilized against such an idea of unity counts as radical. An intervention, Bhabha argues, is progressive if it 'challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenising, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People'."⁴¹

Hybridity is not just a mixing together, it is a dialogic dynamic in which certain elements of dominant cultures are appropriated by the colonised and re-articulated in subversive ways. Bhabha defines hybridity as, "a problematic of colonial representation . . . that reverses the effects of the colonial disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority".⁴² The interaction between the two cultures proceeds with the illusion of transferable forms and transparent knowledge, but leads increasingly into resistant, opaque and dissonant exchanges. It is in this tension that a 'third space' emerges, which Bhabha believes, can effect forms of political change that go beyond antagonistic binarisms between rulers and ruled.

From this perspective Bhabha urges the re-evaluation of the whole of western modernity and postmodernity, as constructions of a culture blind to the very power structures located within

⁴¹ Easthope, Anthony, 'Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity,' *Textual Practice*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1998, pp. 341-348, p. 342

⁴² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.156

its mechanisms of cultural hegemony. Bhabha's idea of hybridity suggests an approach to reading place that understands the overlapping geographies, both indigenous and foreign, and mixed narratives of the past and present day, that were and are constantly negotiated. Those writing histories of such narratives must acknowledge other possibilities, including the contradictions, and biases of the past and equally construct the present, not as an idealised linear narrative of progress, but rather as disjointed and discontinuous. The existence of competing images to describe the history of Kolkata has been presented by only a few scholars,⁴³ and it is within this framework of thought that I relate this thesis.

Hybrid Spaces

Arguably, much recent postcolonial theory is saturated with spatial metaphors, which more often than not function in the 'abstract.' As Jane M. Jacobs in, *Edge of Empire*, points out, "the location of much of the current theory within the fields of literary criticism and history has meant that its relevance to the conditions of everyday life in the present is often oblique."⁴⁴ In much recent cultural studies, hybridity has been discussed extensively, similarly often failing to ground itself in the context of everyday practices. Smith and Godlewska suggest that many of the literary-based re-evaluations of colonialism are ambivalent about geographies, "more physical than imagined."⁴⁵ The possibility of material and imagined geographies being neatly separate, as Smith and Godlewska imply in their critique, is of course unthinkable - one constitutes the other. Doreen Massey proposes that this space is part of, "an ever shifting social geometry of power and signification," made up of both material and ideological

⁴³ Works by these scholars include the following: Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 7-14, 1992, pp. 541-547, and 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?', *Representations*, 37, Winter 1992, pp. 1-26, and, 'The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal,' *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 36, Autumn, 1993, pp. 1-34, and 'Modernity and Ethnicity in India,' in David Bennett (ed.), *Multicultural States Rethinking Difference and Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, and *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, India, 2001; Swati Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, PhD Thesis, University of California, 1997; Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta,' *Public Culture*, 10, part 1, 1997, pp. 83-113

⁴⁴ Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 158

⁴⁵ Smith, N., and Godlewska, A., 'Introduction,' *Geography and Empire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, p.7

constituents.⁴⁶ In much recent social theory the spatial is metaphorically everywhere but mostly nowhere.⁴⁷

As I will argue below, bringing into some kind of dialogue the more 'abstract' worlds of hybridity theory, with the more 'real' worlds of city space, is a necessary manoeuvre in the pursuit of an anticolonial perspective. I contend that the politics of identity and difference established under colonialism and negotiated through a range of postcolonial formations is always located in particular settings. Expressions and negotiations of imperialism do not just occur *in* space, but are fundamentally *about* space. This is obvious to see in the grand territorialisations of the building of empire, but it is also evident in the politics associated with the processes of urban development, which is a part of my PhD.

Similarly, while much postcolonial theory is about difference, and deconstructing master narratives, these concerns are often expressed through grand theory and not through the fundamentally deconstructive space of the 'local.' I am not simply suggesting that the local provides exceptions to the rules, although this is often the case. I am proposing that by attending to the local, and taking it seriously, it is possible to see how discourses of power become unstable across time and space. As Frankenberg and Mani indicate, these detailed accounts of the local mark out the, "tendential lines of force," by which imperialism holds, and is challenged, in the contemporary city.⁴⁸

Understanding the 'spatiality' of hybridity would seem an important consideration in a thesis that analyses architecture and the city. In the context of this study, it begs the question what form does hybridity take in architecture, indeed, what is a 'hybrid' space and how might one identify it? The relevance of hybridity theory to understanding architecture and cities is a subject that has hardly been explored. One of the objectives of this thesis is to investigate this research gap.

⁴⁶ Massey, Doreen, *Space, Place and Gender*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 3

⁴⁷ Refer to: Doreen Massey, 'Politics and Space/Time,' *New Left Review*, 196, November-December 1992, pp. 65-84; and N. Smith, and C. Katz, 'Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialised Politics,' in, M. Keith and S. Pile (eds.), *Place and Politics of Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, pp. 67-83

⁴⁸ Frankenberg, and Mani, 'Crosscurrents, Crosstalk,' p. 307

Barabazaar

This study takes as its empirical focus, a 'traditional' market area situated to the north of the centre of Kolkata, called 'Barabazaar' (figure 1.8). Once affectionately named 'Buro' Bazaar for 'old' Lord Shiva, Barabazaar or the 'Great Bazaar' existed before the British arrived and is the oldest and richest bazaar in Kolkata. It may have been part of the reason for the British deciding to establish a trading station in the area. The English first established themselves in Eastern India in 1633 in Orissa, at the port of Balasore, and the island mart of Hariharpur, but it was not until 1651 that they were able to establish themselves in the Gangetic delta at the town of Hooghly. The Dutch meanwhile had established a factory at Chinsura, close by in 1632⁴⁹ (figure 1.9).

It was trade that sent the English and other Europeans to India, and it was obvious that the delta of the Ganges would be a profitable place to establish a trading station. Bengal was the richest province in India. The great ancient port of Satgoan, about 30 miles upriver from modern-day Kolkata, was diminishing in importance as the river silted up. In about 1550 some of its Indian merchants, the Bysacks and Seths, moved down river to the villages of Gobindapore and Sutanuti. These merchants conducted their business in Sutanuti, which had grown in importance as Portuguese power declined in the area. According to Gupta and Chaliha, "sellers of iron and silver, rice and lentils, fish and meat, bananas, sugar-cane and vegetables, all assembled at what was basically the cotton market."⁵⁰ Betor on the west bank opposite had sprung up to service the traders during the season.⁵¹

The history of colonial Kolkata began with Job Charnock's decision to set up a factory at Sutanuti, where he landed on 24th August 1690. The earliest known plan of Kolkata is Theodore Forresti and John Ollifres, *Plan of Calcutta Showing the Defences*, 1742 (figure 1.10). It shows Barabazaar, here called the 'Gran Bazaar', in north Kolkata with gates, which

⁴⁹ Losty, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, p. 11

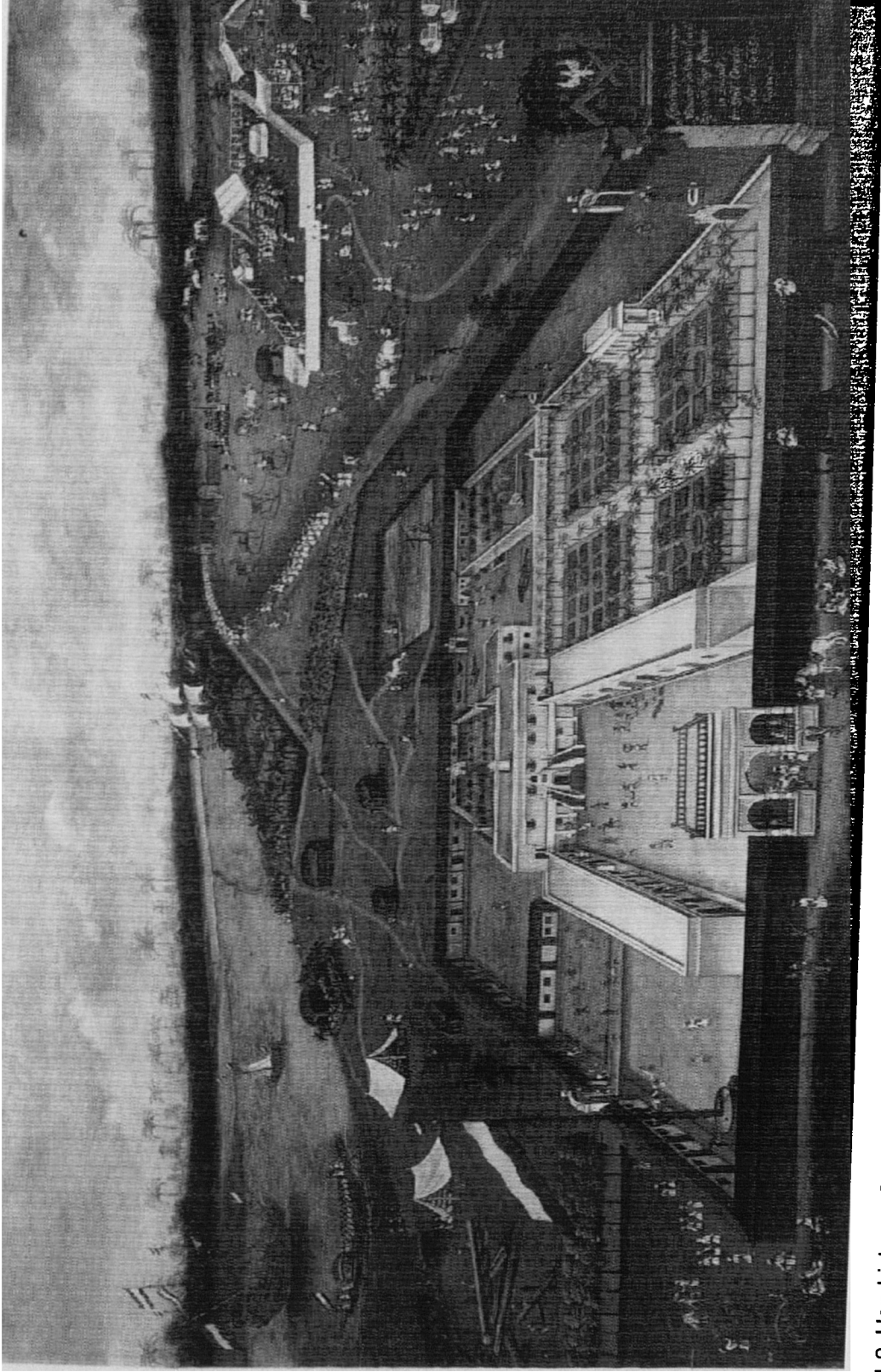
⁵⁰ Gupta, Bunny, and Chaliha, Jaya, 'Barabazaar,' in, *Calcutta the Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 113-116, p.113

⁵¹ Losty, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, p. 11

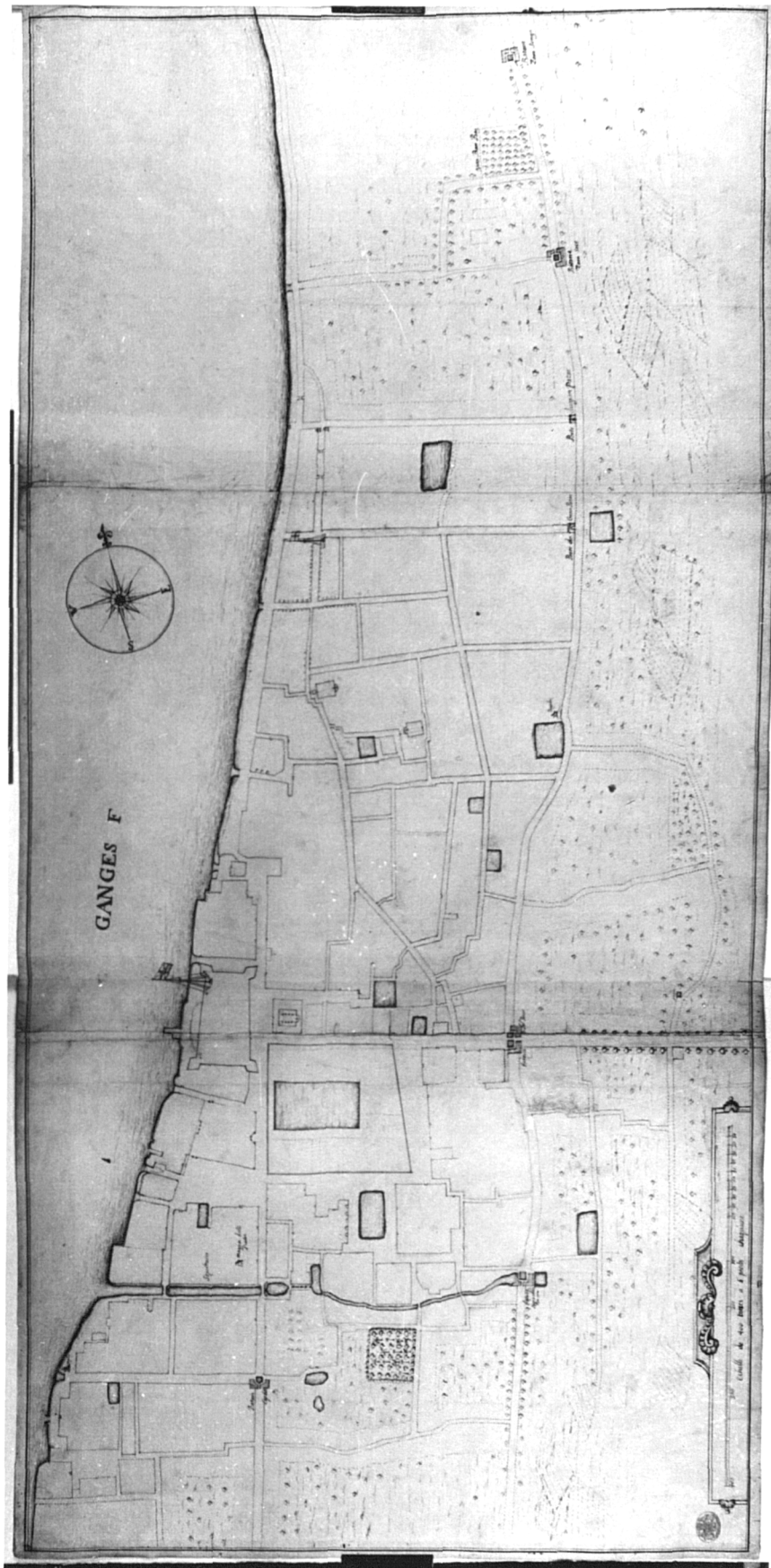


1.8. View of a street in Barabazaar. "On the right, sitting under an awning, are two money-changers; on the left is a fakeer begging alms, and selling chalms. Two merchants, a Jew and a Mogul, occupy the middle of the foreground; and a Durwan, or doorkeeper, sits on a rattan stool on the left"

Captain R. Jump, *Views in Calcutta*, 'Burra Bazaar,' Parbury and co. Ltd., London, 1837
By Permission of the British Library, X446



1.9. Hendrick van Schuylenburgh, The dutch Factory at Hooghly-Chinsura, 1665. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, A4282
Source: Losty, J. P., *Calcutta city of Palaces, A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company 1690-1858*, The British Library Board, London, 1990, p. 13



1.10. Earliest known plan of Kolkata
 Theodore Forresti and John Ollifres, *Plan of Calcutta and the Adjacent Country*, 1742
 By Permission of the British Library, Top.C.XV.40

according to Losty, “suggests it was already walled at this time.”⁵² This area marked the northern limit of Kolkata, and beyond is Sutanuti, which the plan shows with gardens and trees. The eastward limit of the town in this plan is the north-south Chitpore Road, a quarter mile from the river (figure 1.11).

As early as 1738, the existence of Barabazaar was traced by Robert Orme.⁵³ In speaking of the siege of 1756, Orme said that Siraj ud-Daula’s troops set fire to the great bazaar or market within half a mile north-east of the fort (i.e. Barabazaar), and took possession of the quarter inhabited by the principal Indian merchants which commenced half a mile to the north and extended mostly along the river (i.e. Jorobagan and Koomartooly).⁵⁴

Eighteenth and nineteenth Century colonial maps, which although often ignored parts of the Indian town, also showed some of the indigenous urban development of markets in Barabazaar. Upjohn’s map of Calcutta (1793) shows twenty two markets in total, with fifteen in the northern part of the city, although the precise layout of the physical environment in the northern part of the city is not clear (figure 1.12). This map also clearly shows the existence of ‘Barrah Bazaar.’ Most of these bazaars were wholesale markets specialising in particular commodities, and as Chattopadhyay indicates, “provided a nucleus for the gradual accretion of other wholesale dealers, retailers, and entrepreneurs around them.”⁵⁵ In order to get a clearer picture of the accommodation of businesses, we have to rely on documents of a later date.

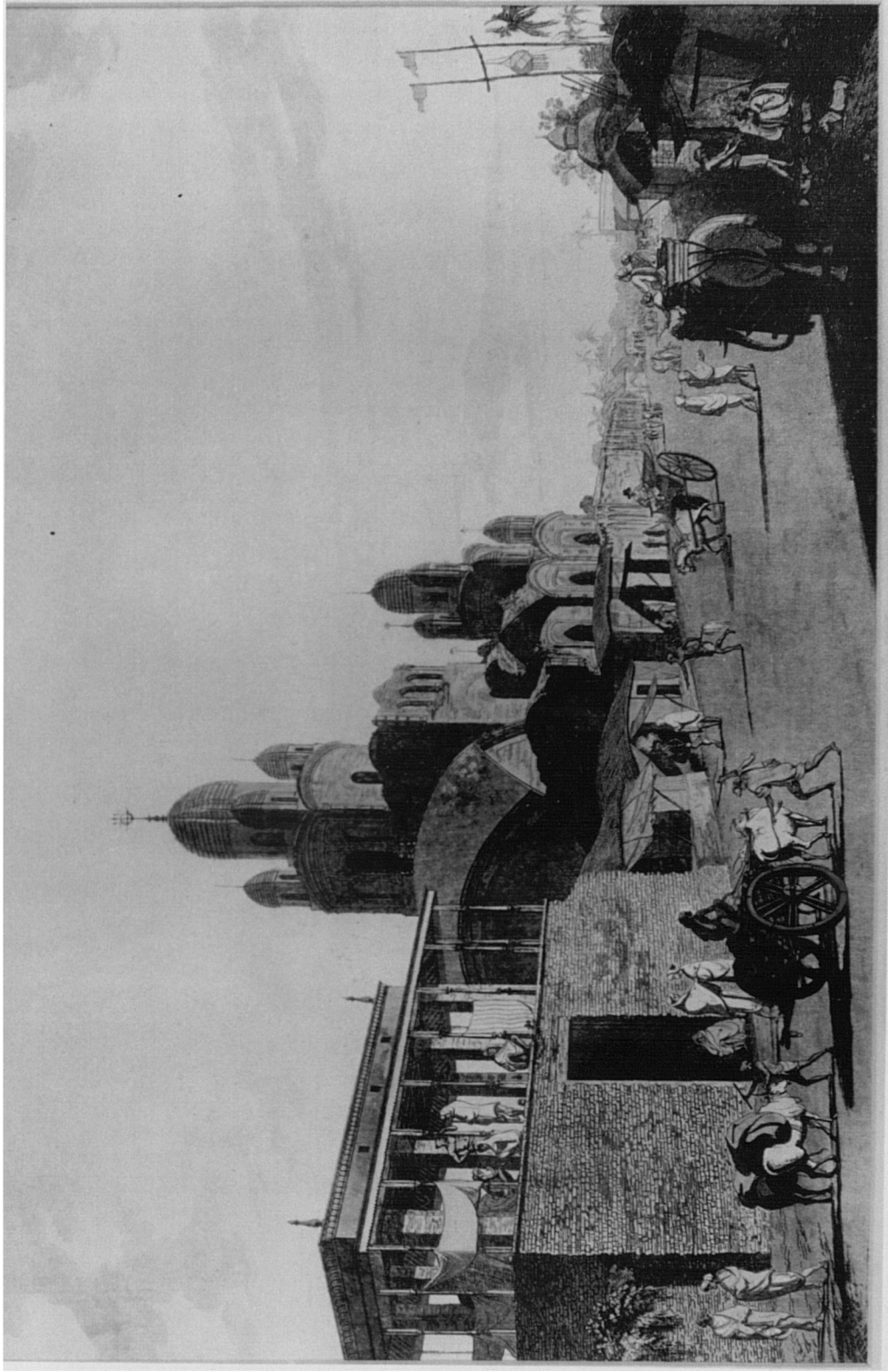
Schlach’s map of Calcutta (1825) shows a remarkable growth in the suburban areas (figure 1.13). By now many new bazaars had been established in various parts of the city, the main new markets shown being Tiretta Bazaar, New China Bazaar, Shaumbazaar and Baug Bazaar. The names of Machuabazaar Street and Jaunbazaar Street also suggest the existence of markets there, although their locations are not shown on the map. Highlighting

⁵² *ibid.*, p.23

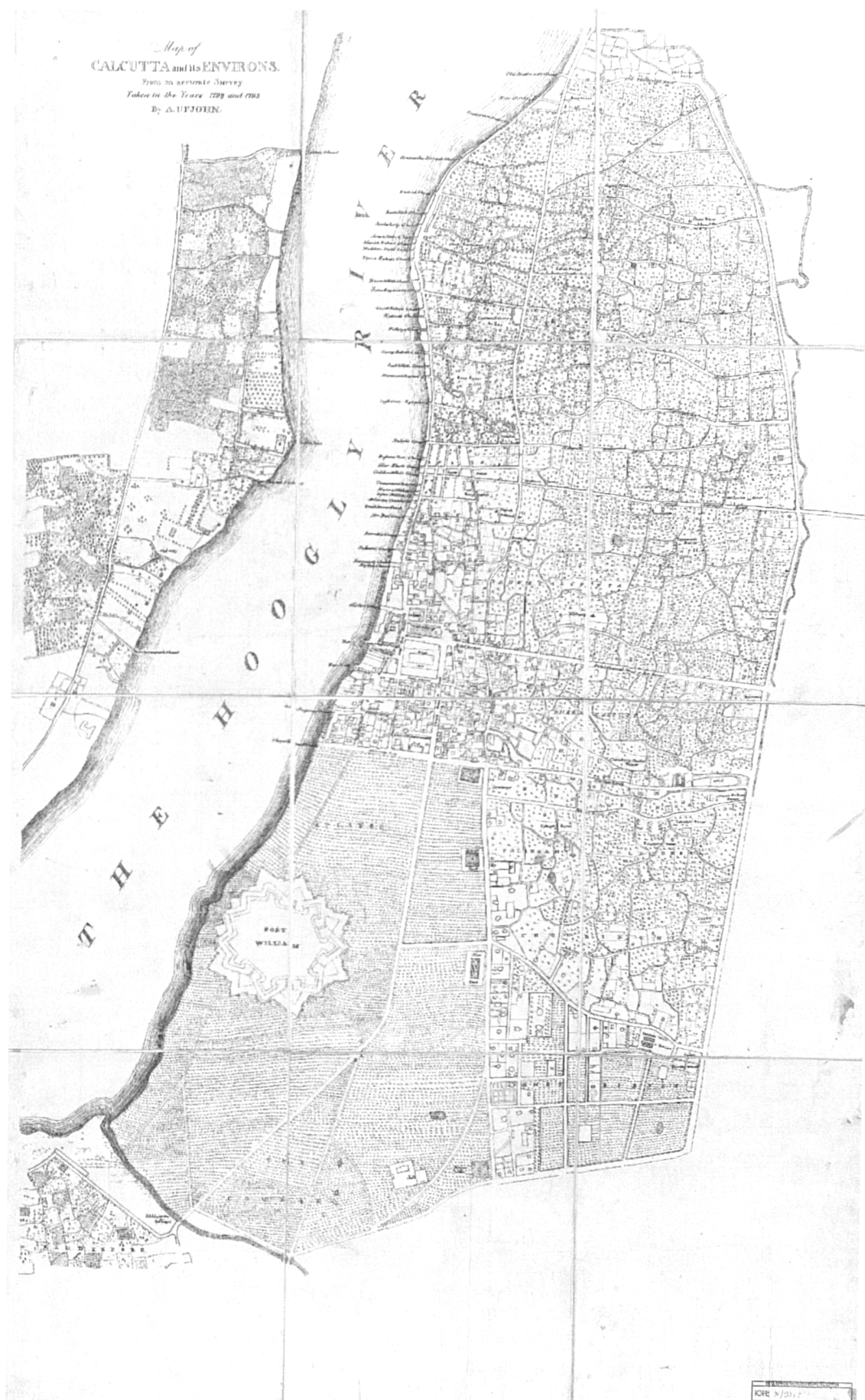
⁵³ Orme, Robert, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from the Year MDCCXLV*, London, 1763 - 78

⁵⁴ Banerjee, Prajnanda, ‘Chapter IV Growth of Burrabazaar,’ in, *Calcutta and its Hinterland, A Study in Economic History of India, 1833-1900*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 110-138

⁵⁵ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 136



1.11. View on the Chitpore road from the South, north Kolkata. "In this view on the Chitpore road (taken in Monsoon season) appears the house of a native Bengal merchant, the style of architecture in its ornamental parts is Mahomedan, except in the turret, which is an unsuccessful attempt at the Grecian, as introduced by the Portugese. The incongruities very frequently occur in modern Indian buildings, whose owners have intercourse with Europeans." Thomas Daniell, *Views of Calcutta*, 'Gentoo Pagoda and House,' 1788
By Permission of the British Library, Pg1/1



1.12. Map of Calcutta and it's Environs form a Survey taken in the Years 1792 and '93. By A. Upjohn
British Library Ref. X/9217 (India Office Records)



1.13. Calcutta Plan of the City and Environs showing Latest Improvements. By I. A. Schlach (1825)
 British Library Ref. X/1211/1-6 (India Office Records)

the bazaars on Schlach's map, we get a glimpse of the pattern of their development in northern Kolkata. J. B. Tassin's map of 1832 shows only a few markets including China Bazaar, the area to the south of Barabazaar, where the case studies are situated (figure 1.14). Captain Smyth's map of Calcutta, showing the latest improvements by the Lottery and Fever hospital Committees in 1854, gives a clear idea as to the urban extension of Calcutta, showing thirty three bazaars in total, with twenty six in the north, including 'Burrah bazaar,' mostly grouped along the river (figure 4.5).

A valuable source of information for this mid-century period is the *New Calcutta Directory*, published between 1854 and 1863.⁵⁶ The *New Calcutta Directory*, of 1863, states that there were 55 bazaars. According to Mondira Ray, "Burrabazaar is mentioned as the largest market in Calcutta; at Chandni market, meat, fish, fruit, poultry, vegetables and household goods were sold daily; Dhurumtala market was the chief market where meat, fish, poultry, fruits and vegetables were produced throughout the year; Raja Sookoomey Posta, a big hat held on Thursdays and Fridays, was the best place for fruits in the city; Taltolla market sold beef and meat of inferior quality; and Tiretta bazaar was known for meat, pork, poultry, fish, fruit and household goods."⁵⁷ It is interesting to note the simple dependence of the growth of markets on population and urban growth. The development of tramways and railways encouraged the growth of markets to a great extent as residential areas developed alongside.

A map of Kolkata accompanied by a Bengali directory was published by Romanauth Dass in 1884, to provide visitors and temporary residents with a better orientation of the city (figure 1.15). The map provided a wealth of information about institutions, professionals, offices, and markets. His map illustrated the specialised nature of the bazaars, such as cotton in Barabazaar. In all he noted fifty five bazaars within the Kolkata municipal limits, including Barabazaar and China bazaar. Dass' map was of course produced a hundred years later than Upjohn's map and showed a city that had tripled in size. But the network of bazaars he presented was a pattern that was set in the previous century.

⁵⁶ *New Calcutta Directory for the Town of Calcutta, Bengal, the North-West Provinces, Punjab, Arracan, Assam, Pegu, Tenasserim*, F. Carberry at the Military Orphan Press, Calcutta 1856-63

⁵⁷ Ray, Mondira Sinha, *The Municipal Markets of Calcutta Three Case Studies*, PhD Thesis, University of London, 1976, p. 22



1.14. Map of the City and Environs of Calcutta constructed chiefly from Major Schlach's map and from Capt. Prinsep's survey of the suburbs. By J. B. Tassin (1832)
British Library Ref. X/1214 (India Office Records)



1.15. Bengali Hand Map of Calcutta (With a list of Streets and Public Buildings) By Romanauth Dass (1884)
British Library Ref. Maps 8c37 (Map Library)

Raghab Bandyopadhyay states that, “today, the Calcutta Municipal Area has 186 markets: 19 directly under the corporation, the other 167 privately owned.”⁵⁸ According to Mondira Ray, the reason for the presence of so many daily markets, in a city like Kolkata, lies partly in its vast population.⁵⁹ Comprising approximately 2.5 square kilometres, today Barabazaar is a conglomerate of private markets with a weekday population of 800,000.⁶⁰

Key Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this thesis is to bring together Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity, with particular places in Barabazaar testing the usefulness of hybridity theory as an interpretive framework in a specific urban setting. In order to do this, I focus on a number of research areas, or contexts of hybridisation in Barabazaar, as follows:

- The construction of a largely colonial ‘urban history of Kolkata,’ and the formation of an intertwined ‘hybrid’ narrative of health and modernity
- The ‘hybrid’ vision that Sir Patrick Geddes adopted for proposals for Barabazaar in 1919
- The ‘hybrid’ sense of space found in the courtyard houses of Barabazaar
- The culture of the street and the bazaar as a paradigmatic example of ‘hybrid’ outside space

It is difficult to say whether these research areas arose out of the theory I was reading, or out of the practice of fieldwork, or out of a space between, a more ‘hybrid’ space. As much as anything they reflect my own personal ‘obsessions’ about architecture and cities. These topics are developed in subsequent chapters of this thesis. Each of the chapters develop quite definite theoretical points and mark distinct ways in which hybridity theory was, or is, articulated in the past, or present, lives of people who live, and/ or work, in Barabazaar. I

⁵⁸ Bandyopadhyay, Raghab, ‘Calcutta’s Markets,’ in Chaudhuri, Sukanta (ed.), *Calcutta The Living city, volume II: The Present and Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 117-122, p. 117

⁵⁹ Ray, *The Municipal Markets of Calcutta*, p. 38

⁶⁰ Gupta and Chaliha, ‘Barabazaar,’ p. 114

begin to evolve ways in which hybridity theory might be used in various contexts, not only to give a more grounded understanding of itself, but also to develop the concept beyond its own boundaries. The chapters are to a certain extent autonomous, but also inevitably connect with one another, purposefully forming a multi-focused comparative understanding of the hybrid city.

Some of my analysis focuses on 'official' colonial discourses about urban space, specifically, city plans, conservation reports, council meeting minutes, and planning inquiry transcripts. Although I realise the interconnected and all pervading nature of the colonial, I am more interested in looking at the spaces of Indian lives as makers of their own histories. I also aim to examine how Indians negotiated their own sense of difference, not only with the British but amongst themselves, along lines of ethnicity and regionality, where the British were not obviously in hegemonic control. In particular, I compare two distinct Indian communities within Barabazaar, namely, the Bengalis and Marwaris. Thus, much of my study also investigates more 'unofficial' debates, such as historical and contemporary Bengali texts, as well as my own interviews with individuals and groups actively participating in the struggles surrounding urban development and change in Barabazaar today. As such this study does not have one, but several perspectives, which shift as I describe the different actors of this story, a position which is typical of hybridity, and the form of writing I describe later as a 'messy text.'

This thesis also draws upon more representational sources, namely the urban structure of Barabazaar itself, and a number of Bengali courtyard houses. However, the material artefacts, the built forms, of Barabazaar are in many senses not the 'main attractions' of my inquiries. I am equally concerned with the complicated politics of the production of urban space, as with the object produced. The field of representations is by no means a mere supplement to my fieldwork. I argue that, together these representational and discursive spheres actively create the material and imaginary landscapes of the city.

Background and Organisation of the Study

Barabazaar was chosen as an empirical focus for this thesis, because it seemed an appropriate 'laboratory' in which to test Bhabha's ideas on cultural hybridity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'intentional hybrid,' which itself is rooted in his writings on the marketplace. Bakhtin regarded the marketplace as a paradigmatic form of hybrid 'outside' space. Indeed, assuming hybridity is an antidote to essentialism as some critics claim, and that the bazaar is the epitome of hybrid space as people like Bakhtin assert, could the marketplace, and Barabazaar specifically, be used as a model for future city space?

On the face of it at least, former colonial cities would seem to provide a potential, 'laboratory of cross-cultural' research. As Anthony King in, *Colonial Urban Development* explains, "for the anthropologist, geographer, architect or planner," former colonial cities provide, "an ideal laboratory for comparing the cultural forms of the European immigrants with those of the indigenous population."⁶¹ However, as King critically admits, "the colonial city was a 'container' of cultural pluralism but one where one particular cultural section had the monopoly of political power."⁶²

As if to highlight this cross-cultural research, halfway through writing this thesis in August 2001, the colonial anglicised name of the city of Calcutta, was changed by Statute to its Bengali version, Kolkata.⁶³ At the risk of offending people from other ethnic groups in Kolkata, I have used the Bengali version throughout, except where the name Calcutta was spoken to me explicitly in interviews, or where I have quoted it from existing literature. It is fair to say that both versions of the city's name are in circulation today, and no doubt will probably be for the foreseeable future.

⁶¹ King, Anthony D., *Colonial Urban Development, Culture, Social Power and Environment*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976, p. xii

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 40

⁶³ For an overview of the origin of the name of Calcutta, refer to: P. T. Nair, *Calcutta: Origin of the Name*, Subaraneekha, Calcutta, 1985

Equally, Barabazaar has had several spellings over the centuries reflecting the Bengali origins of this term. Other spellings have included, 'Burabazar,' 'Burobazar,' and 'Barra Bazaar.' I have generally followed the lead of P. T. Nair, the contemporary Kolkatan historian and used 'Barabazaar,' although in chapter five I use Sir Patrick Geddes' phrase, 'Barra Bazaar.' These are yet more layers of meaning written into the very recent history of naming 'Barabazaar' and 'Kolkata.' On a similar theme, many streets have also changed names since India's independence in 1947, and I have listed both the old colonial and new Bengali versions. Again both versions are still in circulation today.

Part One: 'Reading' Hybrid Space

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part, containing chapters two and three, is largely concerned with 'reading' hybrid space, and looks at conceptual approaches for interpreting the marketplace. In chapter two, I begin by analysing the development and evolution of recent notions of hybridity theory, the conceptual map on which this thesis is based. I also describe concepts of the marketplace through the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Rabelais, who see the marketplace as a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. Building on Bakhtin's notion of the 'intentional hybrid,' Homi K. Bhabha's deployment of the term hybridity in, *The Location of Culture*, shifts it to the dialogical situation of colonialism in India. Here, I argue, albeit with some reservations, that hybridity theory is a possible theoretical antidote to essentialist thinking in the city. I raise a number of questions that emerge from hybridity theory, such as how might hybridity theory enable us to better understand a place like Barabazaar, and what kind of spaces can be termed hybrid?

In chapter three, I primarily deal with the fieldwork undertaken in Kolkata, and the various options and reasons behind the decisions to adopt the particular procedures used. Consistent with a qualitative research strategy, the strategy adopted for this study, I describe the ethnographic research approaches that directed me, highlighting the interlinked themes of postmodernity, postcolonialism and hybridity theory and their effects on these approaches. I also show how Bakhtin has influenced ethnography through 'dialogic' or 'polyphonic' texts. In

this chapter, I attempt to answer the question, how these ‘theoretical’ approaches might affect my own personal attitudes to the ‘practice’ of research, in Barabazaar, and does hybridity theory make us look for alternative ways of translating, or re-describing the stories of Barabazaar?

Part Two: ‘Researching’ Hybrid Space

The second part of this thesis, containing chapters four, five, six, and seven, relates to largely, ‘researching’ hybrid spaces, and focuses on specific places in Barabazaar. Reflecting the ‘material and imaginary landscapes of the city’ described previously, chapters four and five largely analyse historical texts, chapters six and seven investigate social places. Generally speaking, chapters four and five give a broad ‘urban history,’ chapter six is about the architecture of courtyard houses, and chapter seven is about urban spaces in Barabazaar.

In chapter four, I investigate colonial attitudes to disease in Barabazaar, illustrating how hybridity can be found in the most unlikely of contexts, namely that of the colonial state. Debates around health and hygiene were part of the British civilising mission, and through the health and planning reports produced by the British authorities, I explore the construction of a colonial ‘urban history’ of Kolkata. In this context, I ask the question how have debates about health and hygiene developed in association with a hybrid and intertwined narrative of modernity?

In chapter five, and in contrast to the colonial attitudes to health and hygiene described in chapter four, I study the more ‘hybrid’ visions that Sir Patrick Geddes adopted for proposals for Barra Bazaar, in 1919. Geddes’ ideas combined an approach that commended ‘traditional’ Indian courtyard houses, street patterns and external space, with more ‘modern’ ideas for business accommodation. I answer in detail the nature of the alternative vision proposed by Geddes, to that of the colonial establishment, and attempt to understand how hybridity theory might be useful in providing urban solutions in Barabazaar. Indeed, how might Bhabha’s

ideas on hybridity be useful in analysing Geddes work in practice, and interpreting the ambivalent reception of his report on Barabazaar?

In chapter six, I focus on a past and present-day hybrid sense of place, generally found in the middle-class Bengali home, and more specifically in six courtyard houses owned by five families in Barabazaar. Highlighting the impact of factors such as *Durga Puja*, and *Vastu Shastra* on these houses, I show how a hybrid and changing social reality affects the organisation and architecture of these courtyard houses. Returning to themes of modernity, and the related narratives of 'public/ private' life, I ask, how has the changing relationship of 'public/ private' life in the marketplace, developed in association with a hybrid narrative of modernity?

In chapter seven, I focus on the culture of the street and the bazaar, which in India, arguably has formed a 'spatial complex,' a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. I begin by outlining the idea of the street and the bazaar as an ambiguous place for dealing with 'outsiders,' and the production of the 'Marwari' as an outsider within the context of Barabazaar. I show how a hybrid and changing social reality affected the social life and geographies of the bazaar. Investigating case studies located in two streets in the south of Barabazaar, attitudes to 'outside' life are explored next, in order to understand how the culture of the street and bazaar is developing today. I explore the question, is the bazaar a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space, as Bakhtin alleges, and does the 'outsider' embody qualities of the hybrid?

The concluding chapter eight aims to interrogate the main findings of the thesis, making connections between the various chapters. I begin by reflecting on the characteristics of hybridity, as illustrated by my own personal experiences and work on the chapters of this study. Next, I consider how history can be represented in a place like Barabazaar, as well as outlining Bhabha's notion of 'hybrid communities' and 'partial' cultures. I conclude by asking, what are the possibilities and limitations for hybridity theory in re-reading spaces in Barabazaar and the city?

CHAPTER 2

NOTIONS OF HYBRIDITY: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

“Abuses, curses, profanities, and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. They were and are still conceived as a breach of the established norms of verbal address; they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability. These elements of freedom, if present in sufficient numbers and with a precise intention, exercise a strong influence on the entire contents of speech, transferring it to another sphere beyond the limits of conventional language. Such speech forms, liberated from norms, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot and create a special collectivity, a group of people initiated in familiar intercourse, who are frank and free in expressing themselves verbally. The marketplace crowd was such a collectivity, especially the festive, carnivalesque crowd at the fair.”

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and his World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky, MIT Press, 1968, p. 187, 188

Chapter Summary

The previous chapter stated the problems that this PhD addresses, explained the objectives of the thesis, and described the structure and organisation of the study. In this chapter, I begin by analysing the development and evolution of recent notions of hybridity theory, the conceptual map on which this thesis is based. I describe the hybrid linguistic work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's ideas of the hybrid developed from his notions of the marketplace, which themselves are rooted in those of the sixteenth Century French author, François Rabelais. I also describe concepts of the marketplace through the work of Bakhtin and Rabelais, who see the marketplace as a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. Building on Bakhtin's notion of the 'intentional hybrid,' Homi K. Bhabha's deployment of the term hybridity in, *The Location of Culture*, shifts it to the dialogical situation of colonialism in India. I describe this model of hybridity next and its links to identity, exploring it through Bhabha's own study of the arrival and translation of the English Bible, in India. I briefly investigate the development of spatiality in hybridity theory, and the relationship of this notion to urbanism. I conclude by highlighting some of the limitations and possibilities for hybridity theory and raising questions that emerge from hybridity theory, concerning the interpretation of cities, some of which are explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Introduction: Definitions of Hybridity

Today, heterogeneity, cultural interchange and diversity have become the self-conscious identity of modern society. However, given the long history of cultural interaction, it is striking how few models have been developed to analyse it. According to Robert Young, in, *Colonial Desire Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, "in the nineteenth century, models such as diffusionism and evolutionism conceptualized such encounters as processes of the less powerful society and its transformation towards the norms of the West."¹ Today, the dominant models often stress separateness, passing by altogether the process of acculturation, whereby groups are modified through intercultural exchange and socialisation with other

¹ Young, Robert J. C., *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 4

groups. As Young states, “since Sartre, Fanon and Memmi, postcolonial criticism has constructed two antithetical groups, the colonizer and the colonized, self and other, with the second only knowable through a necessarily false representation, a Manichean division that threatens to reproduce the static, essentialist categories it seeks to undo.”² It is only recently that cultural critics have begun to develop accounts of the commerce between cultures that map and shadow the complexities of its generative and destructive processes.³ Paralleling such accounts, are more theoretical models of hybridity which explore the mechanics of the intricate processes of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion, and disjunction.

Hybridity theory has developed as a conceptual language on various fronts. The word ‘hybrid’ developed from biological and botanical origins: in Latin it meant the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar. A second definition, ethnically defined is that of an individual, “having access to two or more identities”, or as the OED puts it, “of human parents of different races, half-breed.” The OED continues: “a few examples of this word occur early in the seventeenth century; but it was scarcely in use until the nineteenth.”⁴ A third definition defines hybridity in cultural terms. According to Young, hybrid is the nineteenth century’s word, but it has become our own again. Young continues: “in the nineteenth century it was used to refer to a physiological phenomenon; in the twentieth century it has been reactivated to describe a cultural one”. Young warns us that, “while cultural factors determined its physiological status, the use of hybridity today prompts questions about the ways in which contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the racialized formulations of the past”.⁵

Hybridity theory has surfaced in anthropology, as well. Claude Lévi-Strauss analysed tricksters as ambiguous and equivocal mediators of contradiction (1963); Victor Turner explored the anti-structural properties of liminality and hybrid sacra (1967); while Mary Douglas recognised the dangerous or beneficial powers of exchange inherent in anomalous

² *ibid.*, p. 5

³ Refer to: Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds, Essays in Cultural Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988, and, *The Post-Colonial Critic Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Sarah Harasym (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 1990

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary, vol. V, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p.480

⁵ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 6

conflations of otherwise distinct categories (1966; 1975).⁶ These contributions to anthropology (commented on in more detail, in chapter three) stressed the capacity of, “hybrid symbolic monstrosities,”⁷ to challenge the accepted local cultural order, and thus to recover a critical self-reflexivity. Their theoretical stance allowed them to explain why such mixings were culturally marked and often hedged with taboos. Hybridity theory also looked to other sites of resistance and exclusion: Jacques Derrida’s project of deconstruction sought to expose the paradoxes and hierarchies within the discourse of Western metaphysics (1967); Roland Barthes investigated the structure of language and the uncertainty of the relationship between ‘signified’ and ‘signifiers’ (1972); Gilles Deleuze’s work on flux, plurality and movement elaborated a series of concepts such as the ‘monad,’ the ‘striated,’ the ‘fold,’ and the ‘rhizome’ (1980); and, Michel Foucault analysed heterotopic spaces (1986).⁸ Such mixings and inversions are ‘hybrid’ in the sense that they juxtapose and fuse objects, languages and signifying practices from different and normally separated domains and, challenge an official, often puritanical public order.

Hybridity theory has also undergone some extensive reinterpretations that have turned it into a key concept in post colonial studies. At the broadest level of conceptual debate, there seems to be a consensus over the use of hybridity as an antidote to essentialist subjectivity (an argument previously outlined, in chapter one). According to Liselotte Glage, the term hybridity in its ‘postcolonial’ connotation was first used in 1980, and the general notion of hybridity was around even earlier though referred to, variously, as ‘creolisation’ or

⁶ I have taken this argument from: Pnina Werbner, and Tariq Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, p. 2.; Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Structural Anthropology*, Claire Jacobsen and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (trans.), Penguin, London, 1963; Turner, Victor, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, N.Y., 1967; Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966, and *Implicit Meanings*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975

⁷ Werbner, Pnina and Modood, Tariq (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, p. 2.

⁸ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology* (1967), Gayatri Spivak (trans.), Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1976, and *Writing and Difference* (1967), Alan Bass (trans.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978; Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Paladin, London, 1972; Foucault, Michael, ‘Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,’ *Diacritics* 16, part 1, 1986, pp. 22-7; Deleuze, Gilles, with Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi (trans.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987

'syncretism'.⁹ The OED's definition of syncretism, designates a, "union or reconciliation of opposite tenets or practices".¹⁰ Creolisation is defined as, "the product of a Creole race; racial modification".¹¹ I will not deal with syncretism or creolisation themselves, frequently treated as a synonym of hybridity, except in passing. The etymological reading of *syncretism*, designates a confluence of cultures whose inherently contradictory forces are kept in peaceful coexistence, rather than the uneasy and agonistic self-splitting models of hybridity, that have been adopted by some postcolonial critics.

Recent writings within postcolonial theory routinely cite the work of Stuart Hall, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, as authorising hybrid identities. In the British context, Stuart Hall has written persuasively of the interrogative effects of hybridisation on contemporary culture. In his influential account, 'New Ethnicities' (1988), Hall suggests that a shift is taking place in Black cultural politics.¹² As Robert Young explains, the first moment of such a politics was that, "of homogenization, of constructing a counter hegemony, an organic hybridization which could contest dominant representations of Blacks in white cultural and aesthetic practices."¹³ Hall suggests that this form of contestation has now moved to include simultaneously a second, a new politics of representation which comprises, "an awareness of the black experience as a *diaspora* experience, and the consequences which this carries for the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut and mix' - in short, the process of cultural *diaspora-ization* . . . which it implies."¹⁴ These processes Hall suggests, do not make up a narrative, first one and then the other: "rather, they are two phases of the same movement, which constantly overlap and interweave."¹⁵ They operate dialogically together, in a double-voiced, hybridised form of cultural politics.

⁹ Taken from Fludernick, Monika (ed.), *Hybridity and Postcolonialism Twentieth Century Indian Literature*, Stauffenburg, Tübingen, 1998, p.10. For a book on 'creolisation,' refer to: Edward Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971; for an article on 'syncretism,' refer to, Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, part 1, 1985, pp. 59-87.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, vol. X, p.378

¹¹ Oxford English Dictionary, vol. II, p.1163

¹² Hall, Stuart, 'New Ethnicities,' in *Black Film British Cinema*, ICA Documents, no. 7, 1988, pp. 27-31

¹³ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 24

¹⁴ Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' p.29, 30

¹⁵ *ibid.*

According to Nikos Papastergiadis in his article, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' "in Stuart Hall's writing the term 'hybridity' is integral to the Bakhtinian-Gramscian perspective that he brings to bear on his representations of social transformation."¹⁶ In addition, claims Papastergiadis, "Hall's work also draws on Derrida's work on *différance* . . . and on Lacanian psychoanalytical notions of gender and its ambivalences."¹⁷ Transformation is seen as occurring in a more 'generative way': as ideas, world-views and material forces interact with each other, they undergo a process of being internally reworked until the old ones are displaced. Papastergiadis explains Hall's notion of hybridity, "as operating on two levels: it refers to the constant process of differentiation and exchange between the centre and peripheries, as well as serving as the metaphor for the form of identity that is being produced from these conjunctions."¹⁸ Hall's representation of hybrid identities as always incomplete does not imply that they aspire to a sense of wholeness and invariably fall short of becoming a finished product but, rather, that their energy for being is directed by the flows of on-going processes.

Hall's perspective presupposes that translation across cultural difference is always possible. But how do we map a culture whose own references do not correspond to ours? How do we represent a culture whose historical memory and conceptual apparatus have been so damaged by the colonial encounter that the very possibility of exchange or dialogue seems no longer to exist? These questions are central to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, 'Can the Subaltern speak?' (1988).¹⁹ Spivak, originally from Kolkata, has answered her own question in the negative: she has stated that the subaltern cannot speak. In fact, the moment the subaltern steps into the arena of representation and negotiation, is the first mark of a movement away from his or her former position. The ability to 'speak up' to the hegemonic forces is already a movement from the condition that is being represented. Spivak repeatedly

¹⁶ Papastergiadis, Nikos, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' in, *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (eds.), Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, p. 274

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in C. Nelson, and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271-313

warns against the presumption, that subaltern experiences are texts that are available for translation.

According to Papastergiadis, "Spivak casts a suspicious glance towards the possibility of benign identification by first world intellectuals with the subaltern."²⁰ The subaltern and the diasporic are, in her view, incommensurable worlds, and projecting the concept of hybridity onto the former is not only misleading, but akin to providing an alibi for global exploitation.²¹ Against such facile claims of unity, she reminds us that subalterity is not a condition to be desired. Taking the rural and landless poor of India as her example, Spivak points out that the question of understanding is not confined to the linguistic problem of translation, for how would you translate a culture whose, "responsibility-based ethical systems have been for centuries battered and compromised",²² into the other cultures notion of democratic rights and civil society? For Spivak, maintains Papastergiadis, "the incommensurability between these two orders is such that the gaps and silences would be more significant than any utterance."²³ There is no clear process by which the realities and experiences of the Indian subaltern can be translated into western categories. Spivak insists that in this instance there is no prior space that can facilitate a dialogue between the West and its Other.

Spivak's analysis of the disenfranchised rural poor may seem to have little relevance to this thesis, which studies the Bengali and Marwari middle classes of Barabazaar. However, Spivak's reminder of the need for added reflexivity over the precise status of who is speaking in place of the subaltern, and who would be able to listen to the subaltern, is a precaution against both false identifications and vague thinking. As Papastergiadis reminds us, for Spivak,

²⁰ Papastergiadis, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' p. 276

²¹ For a study of the commodification of difference and the effects of the global market on the world music festival Womad, refer to, John Hutnyk, 'Adorno at Womad: South Asian Crossovers and the Limits of Hybridity Talk,' in, Werbner, Pnina and, Modood, Tariq (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, pp. 106-136

²² Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'The Narratives of Multiculturalism,' ICCR Lecture, University of Manchester, February, 1995, taken from, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' by Nikos Papastergiadis, p. 276

²³ *ibid.*

“to be in the position to speak for the subaltern is both impossible and unenviable. The poverty and brutalised conditions of the subaltern imply that the very step towards representation involves, at first, a move *out* of its own context. Alienation is the price of every representation.”

Thus Spivak is the most critical in terms of the utility of hybridity theory, and unlike Hall, seems to limit the concept of hybridity as a metaphor for cultural identity. However, between Spivak posing the question and her own negative response, lie profound implications for the languages of resistance, the structures of oppression, and the role of the intellectual. The positive feature of hybridity is that it invariably acknowledges that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference, and that the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions is not necessarily a sign of failure. According to Papastergiadis, “in its most radical form, the concept also stresses that identity is not the combination, accumulation, fusion or synthesis of various components, but an energy field of different forces.”²⁴

The most comprehensively developed notion of hybridity, deployed within the specific context of colonial India with which this thesis is concerned, is to be found in Homi K. Bhabha’s work, and particularly in his seminal book, *The Location of Culture*.²⁵ Bhabha’s work on hybridity is explored in more detail later in this chapter. However firstly, I would like to explain Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1895-1975) ideas of the hybrid, whose work Bhabha explicitly builds upon. Bakhtin’s ideas of the hybrid develop from his own notions of the marketplace, which is why his work is particularly relevant to this thesis.

²⁴ Papastergiadis, ‘Tracing Hybridity in Theory,’ p. 278

²⁵ Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. In, *Location of Culture*, Bhabha provides analyses of novelists such as Morrison, Gordimer, Walcott, Rushdie and Conrad, as well as analyses of documents and archives from the Indian Mutiny, discussions of nineteenth century colonial history, developing world cinema, and post modern space.

Mikhail Bakhtin, François Rabelais, Hybridity and the Marketplace

In, *Rabelais and his World* (1968),²⁶ Bakhtin critiques François Rabelais' novel, *Pantagruel*,²⁷ (1532) claiming that, "in all world literature there is probably no other work reflecting so fully and deeply all aspects of life of the marketplace as does Rabelais' novel."²⁸ The marketplaces that were the settings for *Pantagruel* are those of sixteenth century France. As Bakhtin comments, they are the settings for Rabelais', "own new truth about the world," and at the dawn of the Renaissance, for his attacks on the "Gothic Darkness" of the middle ages.²⁹ For Bakhtin, the marketplace of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was a world in itself, a world which was one. According to Bakhtin, "the marketplace was the center of all that is unofficial; it enjoyed a certain extraterritoriality in a world of unofficial order and official ideology, it always remained 'with the people'."³⁰ Bakhtin believed, "all 'performances' in this area, from loud cursing to the organized show, had something in common and were imbued with the same atmosphere of freedom, frankness, and familiarity."³¹ Bakhtin describes this marketplace more fully, as follows:

"This territory, as we have said, was a peculiar second world within the official medieval order and was ruled by a special kind of relationship, a free, familiar, marketplace relationship. Officially the palaces, churches, institutions, and private homes were dominated by hierarchy and etiquette, but in the marketplace a special kind of speech was heard, almost a language of its own, quite unlike the language of Church, palace, courts, and institutions. It was also unlike the tongue of official literature or of the ruling classes - the aristocracy, the nobles, the high-ranking clergy and the top burghers - though the elemental force of the folk idiom penetrated even these circles. On feast days, especially during the carnivals, this force broke

²⁶ Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and his World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky, MIT Press, 1968

²⁷ Rabelais, François, *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, J. M. Cohen (trans.), Penguin books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1955

²⁸ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 154

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 195

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 153

³¹ *ibid.*

through every sphere, and even through the Church, as in 'the feast of fools'.

The festive marketplace combined many genres and forms, all filled with the same unofficial spirit."³²

In Fontenay-le-Comte, where Rabelais spent his youth in a monastery of the Cordeliers, he had been introduced to the culture of the marketplace. According to Bakhtin, "a great number of salesmen and customers, not only from France but also from other countries, assembled in the town. . . Itinerant hawkers, gypsies, and the obscure *déclassés*, so numerous in those days . . ."³³ Here also, Rabelais became acquainted with the marketplace spectacles, learning about life in the theatre. Bakhtin maintains that, "lost in the crowd, Rabelais attended mysteries, moralities, and farces. The towns of Poitou, Montmorillon, Saint Maixent, Poitiers, and others, were famous for their theatrical productions."³⁴ In the next period of Rabelais' life, spent in Lyon, his relations with the marketplace become even more intimate, since Lyon represented one of the most important markets for publishing and book selling. Bakhtin maintains that, "books were published with an eye to the fairs, summer, autumn, and winter being the busy seasons."³⁵ Bakhtin states also that, "the chroniclers of that time described other mass festivals: the feast of printers and the election of the 'prince of tradesmen'."³⁶

For Bakhtin, his ideas of the hybrid, and the world itself, developed from the ambivalent language of the marketplace. Evidence of this ambivalence, typical of the hybrid, could be found in the unique marketplace language of praise and abuse, which was, "characteristic of folk culture."³⁷ According to Bakhtin such language was two sides of the same coin. Bakhtin explains that praise, "is on the brink of abuse; the one leads to the other, and it is impossible to draw the line between them."³⁸ Abusive words, especially indecent ones, are used in an affectionate and complimentary sense. For Bakhtin, the phenomenon of praise and abuse is,

³² *ibid.*, p. 154

³³ *ibid.*, p. 155

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 156

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 166

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 165

“extremely important for the understanding of entire periods of the development of thought.”³⁹ According to Bakhtin, “this development has not as yet been analysed, but in a preliminary and rather simplified way we can say that it is based on the conception of the world as eternally unfinished: a world dying and being born at the same time . . .”⁴⁰ Bakhtin asserts that, “such a conception of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture . . . for official culture is founded on the principle of an immovable and unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge.”⁴¹ For Bakhtin, *Pantagruel's* prologue is written from beginning to end in the ambivalent marketplace language of praise and abuse. Bakhtin describes the style and tone of this language further, as follows:

“We hear the cry of the barker, the quak, the hawker of miracle drugs, and the bookseller; we hear the curses that alternate with ironic advertisements and ambiguous praise. The prologue is organized according to the popular verbal genres of hawkers. The words are actually a cry, that is, a loud interjection in the midst of a crowd, coming out of the crowd and addressed to it. The man who is speaking is one with the crowd; he does not present himself as its opponent, nor does he teach, accuse, or intimidate it. He *laughs* with it. There is not the slightest tone of morose seriousness in his oration, no fear, piety, or humility. This is an absolute gay and fearless talk, free and frank, which echoes in the festive square beyond all verbal prohibitions, limitations and conventions.”⁴²

Above all for Bakhtin, the marketplace is a utopian space, ‘outside’ of the official local hierarchy and its languages and ‘within’ the popular festive world. For Bakhtin, the cries of the marketplace were not only a mere document of life, but were also filled with philosophical meaning. According to Bakhtin, in the cries and voices of the marketplace, Rabelais heard, “the tones of a banquet for all the people, ‘for all the world.’ These utopian tones were

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 167

immersed in the depths of concrete, practical life, a life that could be touched, that was filled with aroma and sound.”⁴³

According to Stalybrass and White, in, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, “partly because he associated it with the utopian, the ‘no-place’ of collective hopes and desires, Bakhtin simplified the paradoxical, contradictory space of the market and the fair as a place-beyond-place, a pure outside.”⁴⁴ Stalybrass and White argue that Bakhtin, essentialises the marketplace into a utopian ‘pure outside,’ emphasising only one side of the complex doubleness which constitutes the marketplace. At the heart of Stalybrass and White’s critique of Bakhtin is that, Bakhtin succumbs to that separation of the festive and the commercial which is distinctive of capitalist rationality as it emerged in the Renaissance:

“As the bourgeoisie laboured to produce the economic as a separate domain, partitioned off from its intimate and manifold interconnectedness with the festive calendar, so they laboured *conceptually* to re-form the fair as *either* a rational, commercial, trading event or as a popular pleasure-ground. As the latter, the fair had from classical times been continually subject to regulation and suppression on both political and moral grounds.”⁴⁵

Stalybrass and White assert that, it became increasingly difficult, with the development of the ‘economic’ as a separate conceptual sphere in the unfolding of bourgeois thought, to countenance the muddling together of ‘work’ and ‘pleasure/leisure’ as they regularly occurred in the marketplace. The marketplace as a site of hybridisation epistemologically undermined the separation of the ‘economic’ from ‘play’ and the ‘clean’ from the ‘dirty.’ People tried to separate and consolidate the binaries of ‘work’ and ‘play’ but the marketplace continued to mischievously intermix and confuse.⁴⁶

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 185

⁴⁴ Stalybrass, Peter, and White, Allon, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 28

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 30

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

Linguistic Hybridity: Mikhail Bakhtin

At the centre of Bakhtin's work is the principle, usually translated, as 'heteroglossia.'⁴⁷ For Bakhtin, heteroglossia means 'differentiated speech,' and describes the complex stratification, and intertextuality of language and discourse, by the different social groups using it.⁴⁸ According to David Richter in his article, 'Bakhtin in Life and in Art,' heteroglossia, "is the notion that the meaning of language is determined more by social context than by text, in that meaning depends as much on the relationship of speaker to audience as it does to words themselves."⁴⁹ However, Bakhtin uses the term to mean not simply the variety of different languages which occur in everyday life, but also their entry into literary texts. These languages bring with them their everyday associations, which can of course include literary ones, as well as making their own in the textual setting. Sue Vice, in her book *Introducing Bakhtin*, asserts that, "because all languages are related hierarchically, dialogic interaction will occur within textualized heteroglossia, with potentially position-altering effects."⁵⁰

Bakhtin's work on language directs our attention to the everyday pragmatics of literary discourse. Bakhtin uses the term hybridity to discriminate texts, which are monological or with a 'single voice,' (typically poems) from those, which are dialogical or with a 'double voice' (typically novels, particularly where the narrator cites characters speaking in their own voice - for Bakhtin these texts are hybridic).

For Bakhtin, monologism denies, the existence and validity of the Other. Thus purity and clarity of speech, with clear levels of discourse, suggest to him a closed and stratified society without freedom of thought, which according to Bakhtin is devoted to, "terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety. . ."⁵¹ Bakhtin devotes a section in, *Discourse in the Novel* (1935), to a

⁴⁷ For a more detailed overview of 'heteroglossia,' refer to: Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1997, Chapter One, Heteroglossia: 'I hear voices everywhere,' pp. 18-44

⁴⁸ Bakhtin, Mikhail, 'Discourse in the Novel,' in, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist (ed.), Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trans.), University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1981, p. 289

⁴⁹ Richter, David H., 'Bakhtin in Life and Art,' *Style*, volume 20, no. 3, Fall 1986, pp. 411-419, p.411

⁵⁰ Vice, Sue, *Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, p. 18

⁵¹ Richter, 'Bakhtin in Life and Art,' p.412

discussion of the impossibility of representing a character's, "ideological world", without representing his or her discourse or language.⁵² Bakhtin traces the history of this kind of representation back to the late medieval marketplace where the, "devices . . . for constructing images of a language," and, "coupling discourse with the image of a particular kind of speaker" were literally acted out. This took place, "in the minor low genres, on the itinerant stage, in public squares on market days, in street songs and jokes".⁵³

Instead of monologism, Bakhtin values dialogism and the types of discourse he calls 'double voiced.' As Richter explains, what Bakhtin values, "is the Rabelasian carnivalization of literature: the socio-linguistic fun fair where, as in the medieval festival of Carnival, rulers and ruled mix on equal terms in a parodic rout devoted to 'ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything.'"⁵⁴ According to Richter, "Bakhtin's ideas widen out much further - his dialogism is the basis of a genre criticism, which in turn is the basis for a unique approach to the history of literature - but his notion of the languages competing within an individuals speech, the way our discourse is at the same time the discourse of the other, lies at the heart of the critical system."⁵⁵

'Dialogue' appears for Bakhtin, so long as the speaker's language and ideas bear visibly the imprint, the pressure of the Other, inside or outside the novel, to whom it is addressed. In his study of Dostoyevsky, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1929), Bakhtin argues that the Russian writer's fiction has a dialogic or 'polyphonic' structure in that it includes the voice of the Other within itself.⁵⁶ For example, with a text like, *The Brothers Karamozov* (1880), 'the other's discourse gradually, stealthily penetrates the consciousness and the speech of the hero'.

⁵² Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' p. 335

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 400

⁵⁴ Richter, 'Bakhtin in Life and Art,' p.412

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.412

⁵⁶ Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Caryl Emerson (ed. and trans.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1984

For Bakhtin, hybridity also describes the condition of language's fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different. This insight, as Robert Young indicates, is, "often identified with Romantic irony, [and] is central to the contemporary work of Derrida and de Man, who point to it as a general characteristic of language, an undecidable oscillation in which it becomes impossible to tell which is the primary meaning".⁵⁷ Bakhtin, himself, sees hybridisation as, "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor".⁵⁸ Bakhtin defines hybridity, in his book *Dialogic Imagination*, as follows:

"What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical [syntactic] and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems. We repeat, there is no formal - compositional and syntactic - boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a single sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction - and consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents."⁵⁹

Bakhtin gives an example of hybridisation from Turgenev's *Virgin Soil* (1877): 'But Kallomyetsev deliberately stuck his eyeglass between his nose and his eyebrow, and stared at the [snit of a] *student who dared not share* his "apprehensions" [*Virgin Soil*, Ch. 7]'. Bakhtin points out, this quotation is composed of two accents: 'the authors ironic transmission, and a mimicing of the irritation of the character'. Kallomyetsev's tone is used to render the 'snit of a student' and what he sees as the student's timorousness: he 'dared not share. . .' According

⁵⁷ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 20

⁵⁸ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.358

⁵⁹ Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' p. 304, 305

to Bakhtin, the whole utterance is 'permeated with the ironic intonation of the author,' and as such is a hybrid construction.⁶⁰

'Organic' and 'Intentional' Hybridity

Within Bakhtin's notion of linguistic hybridity, he makes a fundamental distinction between what he calls 'intentional hybridity' and unconscious 'organic hybridity':

"Unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. We may even say that language and languages change historically primarily by hybridization, by means of a mixing of various 'languages' co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect, a single national language, a single branch, a single group of different branches, in the historical as well as paleontological past of languages."⁶¹

Organic, unconscious hybridity is a feature of the historical evolution of all languages. Applying it to culture and society, hybridity shows that culture evolves historically through unreflective borrowings, appropriations and exchanges. Organic hybridisation does not disrupt the sense of order and continuity: new images, words, objects, are integrated into language or culture unconsciously. Yet despite this fact, Bakhtin says that, "organic hybrids remain mute and opaque, such unconscious hybrids . . are pregnant with potential for new world views".⁶²

Bakhtin, however, is more concerned with a hybridity that has been politicised and made contestatory, the moment where, within a single discourse, one voice is able to unmask the other. This is the point where authoritative discourse is undone. Authoritative discourse Bakhtin argues must be 'monological' or 'single-voiced', "it is by its very nature incapable of

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.318

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.358, 359

⁶² *ibid.*, p.360

being double-voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions”⁶³ - or if it does, it’s single voiced authority will immediately be undermined. It is the organising intention of the artist that dialogizes hybridity: “intentional semantic hybrids are inevitably internally dialogic . . . Two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically”.⁶⁴ In organic hybridity, the mixture merges and is fused into a new language, world view or object; but intentional hybridity sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains, “a certain elemental, organic energy and openendedness”.⁶⁵ Bakhtin concludes:

“Summing up the characteristics of a novelistic hybrid, we can say: as distinct from the opaque mixing of languages in living utterances that are spoken in a historically evolving language (in essence, any *living* utterance in a *living* language is to one or other extent a hybrid), the novelistic hybrid is *an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language.”⁶⁶

Hence ‘organic’ hybridity creates the historical foundations on which ‘intentional’ hybrids build to shock, change, challenge, revitalise or disrupt through deliberate, intended fusions of unlike social languages and images. Intentional hybrids create an ironic double consciousness, a ‘collision between differing points of view on the world’, allowing language to be both the same and different.

Postcolonial Hybridity: Homi K. Bhabha

Bhabha’s conceptualisations of hybridity build on Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘intentional hybrid’. In an astute move, Bhabha has shifted Bakhtin’s ideas on the subversion of authority to the dialogical situation of colonialism, where it describes a process that, “reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority.” For Bhabha, hybridity becomes the

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.344

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.360

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.361

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other, enabling the postcolonial critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text. As Bhabha says, "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference".⁶⁷ Echoing Bakhtin's thinking, Robert Young comments:

"The hybridity of colonial discourse thus reverses the structures of domination in the colonial situation. It describes a process in which the single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced: 'The effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions'. The voice of colonial authority thus hears itself speaking differently, interrogated and strategically reversed:' If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization . . . [it] enables a form of subversion . . . that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention'."⁶⁸

Bakhtin's intentional hybrid has been transformed by Bhabha into an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant cultural power. Bhabha translates this moment into a, "hybrid displacing space", which develops in the interaction between the indigenous and colonial culture a, "Third Space", which, "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom".⁶⁹ At this point, hybridity begins to become the form of cultural difference itself, the jarrings of a differentiated culture whose "hybrid counter-energies",⁷⁰ challenge the centred, dominant cultural norms with their unsettling perplexities generated out

⁶⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 107

⁶⁸ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 23

⁶⁹ Bhabha, Homi K., 'The Third Space Interview with Homi Bhabha,' in, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, by, John Rutherford (ed.), Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1990, p. 211

⁷⁰ Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993, p.406

of their, "disjunctive, liminal space".⁷¹ As Young acknowledges, "hybridity here becomes a third term which can never in fact *be* third because, as a monstrous inversion, a miscreated perversion of its progenitors, it exhausts the differences between them".⁷²

Bhabha and Identity

Bhabha's notion of identity is that it is never fixed once and for all, and never coheres into an absolute form. For example, he describes minority discourse as emerging from the, "in between of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy."⁷³ However, the refusal to accept the primacy of an originary essence, or the inevitability of an ultimate destiny for identity, is not an invitation to celebrate the liberation from substantive structures. As Nikos Papastergiadis states:

The theoretical qualification on the processes of identity formation in no way implies that identity is constructed out of a political and cultural vacuum. To elaborate the elasticity in the trajectory of identity is not a vindication of the claims that the horizons are boundless, access is free and the past is without weight or shape.⁷⁴

According to Bhabha, attention to the process of identification requires a finer recognition of the strategy of negotiation. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha claims there is a space, "in-between the designations of identity", and that, "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy".⁷⁵ Identity always presupposes a sense of location and a relationship with others. Tim Woods indicates that, "Bhabha's central preoccupation is the manner in which the European practice of cultural analysis hitherto has glossed over the

⁷¹ Bhabha, Homi K., 'Dissemination,' in *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), Routledge, London, 1990, p. 312

⁷² Young, *Colonial Desire*, p.23

⁷³ Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 307

⁷⁴ Papastergiadis, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' p. 277

⁷⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 4

ambivalence of the location of culture. His efforts are aimed at exploring how to articulate (indeed whether one can articulate) this liminal space of marginality in cultural production".⁷⁶

The stress Bhabha gives to belatedness in the representation of identity is also connected to a deeper problematic of the partiality of representation in general. The status of representation is defined more by its limitations and distortions than by its ability to capture an 'elusive' spirit or hold the totality of presence. We could say that representations of identity are at best a 'rear view' of a part of the past that is pushing us forward into the future. As Papastergiadis states, "for Bhabha, Jameson's attention to pastiche, Said's appreciation of the contrapuntal, Deleuze and Guattari's tracking of nomadology, are parallel metaphors for naming the forms of identity which emerge in a context of difference and displacement".⁷⁷

The 'Native' Bible

Echoing Bakhtin's analysis of seminal Russian literature, Bhabha has studied the arrival and translation of the English Bible within the context of colonial India, as an example of the ambivalent effects of hybridity. Bhabha begins by setting the scene: "in the first week of May 1817, Anund Messeh, one of the earliest Indian catechists, made a hurried and excited journey from his mission in Meerut to a grove of trees outside Delhi."⁷⁸ There he found about 500 people seated under the shade of the trees. Anund realised these people were reading the bible and asked them how they obtained it. Bhabha explains:

"'An Angel from heaven gave it us at Hurdwar fair.' - 'An Angel?' 'Yes, to us he was God's Angel: but he was a man, a learned pundit.' . . . 'The written copies we write ourselves, having no other means of obtaining this blessed word.' - 'These books,' said Anund, 'teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use.' 'Ah no,' replied the stranger, 'that cannot be, for they eat flesh.' - 'Jesus Christ,'

⁷⁶ Woods, Tim, 'The Location of Culture by Homi K. Bhabha' (Book Review), *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 35, no. 8, October 1978, pp. 160-166

⁷⁷ Papastergiadis, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory,' p. 278

⁷⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.102

said Anund, 'teaches that it does not signify what a man eats or drinks. EATING is nothing before God. *Not that which entereth into a man's mouth defileth him, but that which cometh out of his mouth, this defileth a man: for vile things come forth from the heart. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts; and these are things that defile.*'⁷⁹

For Bhabha, the natives' questions, "turn the origin of the book into an enigma,"⁸⁰ and he makes two points about this scene. Firstly: *how can the word of God come from the flesh eating mouths of the English?* - a question that for Bhabha, "faces the unitary and universalist assumption of authority with the cultural difference of its historical moment of enunciation."⁸¹ The Word would have certainly borne absolute witness had it not been for the fact that most Hindus were vegetarian: "by taking their stand on grounds of dietary law, the natives resist the miraculous equivalence of God and the English."⁸²

Secondly: *how can it be the European Book, when we believe that it is gods gift to us? He sent it to us at Hurdwar* - again for Bhabha this, "reveals the penetrative power - both psychic and social - of the technology of the printed word in early nineteenth century rural India."⁸³ What Bhabha is alluding to is the Burdwan plan to deploy 'natives' to destroy native culture and religion.⁸⁴ According to Bhabha, "contemporary missionary records reveal that, in middle India alone, by 1815 we could have witnessed the spectacle of the Gospel 'doing its own work', as the Evangelicals put it, in at least eight languages and dialects, with a first edition of between one thousand and ten thousand copies in each translation."⁸⁵

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.103, 104

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.116

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*, p.117

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.116, 117

⁸⁴ According to Homi K. Bhabha in, *The Location of Culture*, "By 1817 the Church Missionary Society ran sixty-one schools, and in 1818 it commissioned the Burdwan Plan, a central plan of education in the English language. The aim of the plan anticipates, almost to the word, Thomas Macaulay's infamous 1835, 'Minute on Education': to form a body of well instructed labourers, competent in their proficiency in English to act as Teachers, Translators, and compilers of useful works for the masses of the people," p. 105

⁸⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.117

In the same month that Anund Messeh discovered the miraculous effects of the book outside Delhi - May 1817 - a correspondent of the Church Missionary Society wrote to London describing the method of English education at Father John's mission in Tranquebar:

"The principal method of teaching them the English language would be by giving them English phrases and sentences, with a translation for them to commit to memory. These sentences might be so arranged as to teach them whatever sentiments the instructor should choose. They would become, in short, attached to the Mission; and though first put into the school from worldly motives alone, should any of them be converted, accustomed as they are to the language, manners and climate of the country, they might soon be prepared for a great usefulness in the cause of religion. . . . In this way the Heathens themselves might be made the instruments of pulling down their own religion, and of erecting in its ruins the standards of the Cross."⁸⁶

Bhabha sees the arrival of the Bible in India as, "an *Enstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition [in which] the dazzling light of literature sheds only areas of darkness."⁸⁷ The Bible's arrival is a paradox; "it is at once a moment of originality and authority: as well, a process of displacement that paradoxically makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced."⁸⁸ He describes this paradox more fully as:

"a signifier of authority, the English book acquires its meaning *after* the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior, archaic image or identity. Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be 'original' - by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it - nor 'identical' - by virtue of the difference that defines it."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *The Missionary Register*, Church Missionary Society, London, May 1817, p. 187, quoted in, Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.106

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.105

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.102

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.107

The discovery of the English book established both a measure of mimesis and a mode of order. However, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. Bhabha presents the English Bible, used by coloniser and colonised alike, in, "the wild and wordless wastes of colonial India,"⁹⁰ as a product of, "colonial hybridity that no longer commands authority,"⁹¹ as uncertain as colonial rule itself. As Bhabha reflects, "it is through this partial process, represented in its enigmatic, inappropriate signifiers - stereotypes, jokes, multiple and contradictory belief, the 'native' bible - that we begin to get a sense of a specific space of colonial discourse."⁹² Anund Messeh's tale emerges as a *question* of colonial authority, an agonistic space; "then the words of the master become the site of hybridity . . . then we may not only read between the lines but even seek to change the often coercive reality that they so lucidly contain." ⁹³

The Spatiality of Hybridity

Of course, all these linguistic and textual issues beg the question, is there a more material spatiality to hybridity? In the context of this PhD, which deals with both textual and material matters, what kinds of spaces can be termed hybrid? Indeed, what constitutes hybrid urbanism and is it simply a product of hybrid identities? Hybridity theory has only appeared recently in architectural debates in a modest way. There have been only three contemporary books on the inter-related subject of postcolonialism and architecture, namely, Jane M. Jacobs's, *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City* (1996), G. B. Nalbantoglu and C. T. Wong's edited book, *Postcolonial Space(s)* (1997), and Abidin Kusno's, *Behind the Postcolonial Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (2000), as well as the special edition journal, *AA Files* 49, 'London: Postcolonial City' (2003).⁹⁴ Whilst there have

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.113

⁹² *ibid.*, p.120

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.121

⁹⁴ Jacobs, Jane M., *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996; Nalbantoglu, G. B., and Wong, C. T. (ed.), *Postcolonial Space(s)*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1997; Kusno, Abidin, *Behind the Postcolonial Architecture, Urban Space and Political*

been a number of articles on hybridity and architecture,⁹⁵ only one edited book has specifically addressed this subject, namely Nezar AlSayyad's *Hybrid Urbanism* (2001).⁹⁶ This book attempts to ground itself in the concrete realities of the physical environment; "in neighbourhoods, housing projects, urban squares, and city streets."⁹⁷ As AlSayyad states, "anchoring their work in specific case studies that mainly concern nineteenth and twentieth century place, the contributors . . . present a rich cross cultural understanding of how the notion of hybridity has contributed to the shaping of a unique urbanism."⁹⁸ This thesis also hopes to echo such aims.

Bakhtin's own notion of hybridity is derived from the ambivalent language of the marketplace, using it to analyse language rather than space. Analysing Bakhtin's work on the marketplace, Stalybrass and White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, ask the question, "How does one 'think' a marketplace?"⁹⁹ The marketplace is both a bounded enclosure and a site of open commerce, the imagined centre of an urban community and its structural interconnection with the network of goods, commodities, markets, sites of commerce and places of production which sustain it. The marketplace is the epitome of local identity. Often it is what defined a place as more significant than surrounding communities, and the unsettling of that identity by the trade and traffic of goods from elsewhere. Stalybrass and White continue:

At the market centre of the polis we discover a commingling of categories usually kept separate and opposed: centre and periphery, inside and outside, stranger and local, commerce and festivity, high and low. In the marketplace

Cultures in Indonesia, Routledge, London and New York, 2000; Architectural Association School of Architecture, *AA Files 49*, 'London: Postcolonial City,' Spring 2003

⁹⁵ Beattie, Martin, 'Hybrid Identities: Courtyard Houses of Barabazaar, Kolkata,' in, *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter*, Sarah Menin (ed.) Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 154-165; 'Colonial Space: Health and Modernity in Barabazaar, Kolkata,' *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, June 2003, pp. 7-19; 'Sir Patrick Geddes and Barabazaar: Competing Visions, Ambivalence and Contradiction,' *Journal of Architecture*, Spring 2004, pp. 131-150; and Morton, Pat, 'A Study in Hybridity: Madagascar and Morocco at the 1931 Colonial Exposition,' *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 52, No. 2, November 1998, pp. 76-86

⁹⁶ AlSayyad, Nezar, *Hybrid Urbanism On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, USA, London, 2001

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. ix

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. x

⁹⁹ Stalybrass, and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 27

pure and simple categories of thought find themselves perplexed and one-sided.¹⁰⁰

Thus, according to Stallybrass and White, in the marketplace 'inside' and 'outside,' 'public' and 'private' (and hence identity itself) are persistently mystified. They argue, (albeit with reservations previously explained), that on the face of it, the marketplace would seem to be an archetypal place of hybridity.

Perhaps the most obvious spatialised dimension of Bhabha's concept of hybridity is the metaphorical "third" space - the sense of a liberatory, 'in-between' realm, an area that has been extensively explored by those fascinated with borders, as the ultimate third space.¹⁰¹ Gloria Anzaldua started the borderlands debate with her book, *Borderland/ La Frontera* (1987). Anzaldua writes, "the new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity . . . she learns to juggle cultures . . . not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else."¹⁰² Arif Dirlik continued this line of thinking stating, "borderlands point not only to liberated zones but to zones that pose new problems for the task of liberation and may at best serve as points of departure, not as points of arrival."¹⁰³ Jan Pieterse has argued that the hybrid formations of the twentieth century manifest themselves in hybrid sites and spaces such as border zones, borderlands and ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. According to Pieterse, border zones are the meeting places of different organisational modes, and include such places as Free Enterprise Zones and off-shore banking facilities, hybrid meeting places of state sovereignty and transnational enterprise.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ For further information on this literature refer to: Louis Mendoza, 'The Border Between Us: Contact Zone or Battle Zone?', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 119-138; Shaobo Xie, 'Writing on Boundaries: Homi Bhabha's Recent Essays,' *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 27, no. 4, October 1996, pp. 155-166

¹⁰² Anzaldua, Gloria, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, San Francisco, 1987, p.79, quoted in, AlSayyed, *Hybrid Urbanism*, p. 14

¹⁰³ Dirlik, Arif, *After the Revolution*, Hanover and London, Wesleyan University Press, 1994, pp. 107-108, and quoted in, AlSayyed, *Hybrid Urbanism*, p. 14

¹⁰⁴ Pieterse, Jan N., 'Globalisation as Hybridization,' in M. Featherstone et al. (eds.), *Global Modernities*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, California, and New Delhi, 1995, p. 51, quoted in, AlSayyed, *Hybrid Urbanism*, 2001, p. 11

These writers point to the emergence of borderlands and the sites in-between as the prime and typical spaces of global encounter. As Ananya Roy comments, "borders, unlike boundaries, signify the copresence of identities foreign to one another, a confrontation with inalienable difference."¹⁰⁵ Like Bakhtin's marketplace, borders also hint at the possibilities of crossing over, of violating and redrawing limits. They carry with them as Katherine Mitchell has commented, "the febrile fascination and flavour of the illicit."¹⁰⁶

Conclusions: Limitations and Possibilities in Notions of Hybridity Theory

Prina Werbner remarks that, "the current fascination with cultural hybridity masks an elusive paradox."¹⁰⁷ Hybridity is celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet theorised as commonplace and pervasive. For Werbner, "born out of the paradigmatic shift in theory from the modernist to the postmodernist, the paradox is energised by anti-essentialist, anti-integrationist zeal."¹⁰⁸ The power of cultural hybridity - one side of the paradox - makes sense for modernist theories that ground cultures in ordered and systematic categories; theories that analyse society as if it were bounded and structured by self evident cultural truths and official discourses. As Werbner states, "in such theories, it makes sense to talk of the transgressive power of symbolic hybrids to subvert categorical oppositions and hence to create conditions for cultural reflexivity and change; it makes sense that hybrids are perceived to be endowed with unique powers, good or evil, and that hybrid moments, spaces or objects are hedged in with elaborate rituals, and carefully guarded and separated from mundane reality."¹⁰⁹

But what if cultural mixings and crossovers become routine in the context of globalising trends? Does that obviate the hybrid's transgressive power? And if not, how is postmodernist theory to make sense, at once, of both sides, both routine hybridity and transgressive power? Of course, as I have previously explained, these two sides of hybridity respectively mirror

¹⁰⁵ Roy, Ananya, 'The Reverse Side of the World': Identity, Space, Power,' quoted in, AlSayed, *Hybrid Urbanism*, pp. 229-245, p. 238

¹⁰⁶ Mitchell, Katherine, 'Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography Back in,' *Antipode*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1997, p.101, quoted in Roy, 'The Reverse Side of the World,' p. 238

¹⁰⁷ Werbner, and Modood, (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, p. 1

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

Bakhtin's two definitions of an 'organic,' or routine hybridity, and 'intentional,' or transgressive hybridity. Edward Said, in, *Culture and Imperialism*, states that, "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic".¹¹⁰ In other words, is there a culture that is not hybrid? Who, or what, is not hybrid? Were the old essentialising categories of cultural identity, or of race, really so essentialised, or have they been retrospectively constructed as more fixed than they were? Here, hybridity theory becomes almost a theoretical meta-construction of social order, making, "difference into sameness, and sameness into difference," albeit qualified, as Robert Young states, "in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer different."¹¹¹ In this instance, there is the danger that hybridity says nothing, or at best hints at a kind of disjunctive pluralism. I will argue in this thesis that hybridity theory gives us specific understandings, helping us to interpret the processes of cultural interaction going on in particular city spaces, like Barabazaar.

Bhabha's own work has been described as difficult and elusive, with complex impenetrable theory. Gillian Rose states, "his text is really very convoluted in places: knots of dense theoretical complexity entangle the reader, who is then offered threads of wonderful argument to follow, only to be snarled up again a few paragraphs later."¹¹² Arguably, his discussions resist efforts to survey his work in relation to debates in postcolonial literary theory, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, cultural studies, or feminism, "because he refuses to systematise either his own arguments or those of others in ways which would allow comparison between his text and their context."¹¹³ For Rose this style of writing offers, "neither a pellucid narrative with which to map a path through these essays, nor a map of different theoretical positions onto which I can trace Bhabha's conceptual territory."¹¹⁴ It is partly because of the form of its resistance to both summary and overview that Bhabha's work can be described as difficult.

¹¹⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxix

¹¹¹ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p.26

¹¹² Rose, Gillian, 'The Interstitial Perspective: A Review Essay on Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 13, 1995, pp. 365-373, p. 356

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

Bhabha's work has also been criticised for, "being overly 'textual' and therefore not adequately critical" and engaging, "with complex theoretical issues in tangential rather than systematic ways."¹¹⁵ According to Rose,

"He might then be one of those authors accused by geographers such as Chouinard (1994), Gregson (1993), Harvey (1992), and Whatmore (1992) of writing in a manner quite impenetrable to those outside a narrow theoretical project. Not only does he thus risk obscurity at best and according to these critics, elitism at worst: but Bhabha is also arguing that, to understand colonialism and postcolonialism, we must pay attention to 'the irredeemable act of writing.'"¹¹⁶

These critics worry that a particular style of writing 'about writing' involves a concern for the purely 'textual', which also entails an abandonment of the social, and an evacuation of the critical. However, for Bhabha, his style of writing, adopting "the interstitial perspective,"¹¹⁷ is deliberate. As Rose acknowledges,

"Bhabha's writing constantly hovers between arenas once thought distinct, brushing both against their grain: between theories (particularly between Foucault and Lacan); between novels and theory and theory and poems; between boisterous polemical fulmination and baroque poststructuralist formulation; between loneliness and gathering; between world and text."¹¹⁸

It is this unresolvable tension between locations which makes a contextual overview of his project impossible. There is then, no point of closure in his text, no moments of absolute beginning or end, only a restless shifting in the interstices of positions. According to Rose, "Bhabha writes elusively, and the effect is an uncanny text in which the Western academic tradition is being performed but not quite properly." Bhabha describes such mimicking

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 366

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Rose, 'The Interstitial Perspective,' p. 367

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

impropriety as, “sly civility,”¹¹⁹ and argues that it is a destabilising tactic in, “a space of interpretation and misappropriation that inscribes an ambivalence at the very origins of . . . authority.”¹²⁰ For Rose, “in his theoretical in/competence, then, Bhabha writes the hybrid.”¹²¹

Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, whilst liberating the analysis of colonial discourse from the binary oppositions of ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised,’ ‘core’ and ‘periphery,’ has generated further problems. The postcoloniality of Bhabha’s work has been called into question for its own ambivalence towards the agency of the colonised subject. Aijaz Ahmad is only one amongst many, who point out the dangers of Bhabha’s exploration, an exploration which lends itself to the aspecificity and ahistoricity of a hybrid subject remarkably free of any gender, class or race constraints.¹²² Ahmad argues that hybridity fails to move beyond the ephemeral and the contingent masking long-term social and political continuities and transformations. In the ‘real world,’ political agency is, “constituted, not in flux and displacement but in given historical locations,”¹²³ by having a coherent, “sense of place, of belonging, of some stable commitment to one’s class or gender or nation.”¹²⁴ Thomas suggests that attention to the, “psychic dynamics of self-other relations . . . cannot be accorded. . . historic peculiarity,” and calls for a more, “socially and historically grounded characterisation,” of colonialism’s cultural purchase.¹²⁵ Thomas implies that the transcendental applicability of the psychoanalytical perspective will be challenged by historical specificity. Whilst acknowledging the partiality of this thesis, naturally I hope that this study set in a number of particular places, and specific historical contexts, goes some way to addressing these issues.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Ahmad, Aijaz, ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality,’ in, *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory A Reader*, Padmini Mongia (ed.), Arnold, London and New York, 1996, pp. 276-293, p. 287

¹²³ Ahmad, Aijaz, ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality,’ *Race and Class*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 1-20, p. 16, and quoted in, Werbner, Pnina and, Modood, Tariq (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, p. 21

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Thomas, N., *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 49 & 51

The presence of agency or intentionality is, for some, a crucial component in designating certain formations as properly postcolonial.¹²⁶ For some the 'post' in postcolonialism refers to the 'space clearing gesture', that is, those formations which are actively concerned with going beyond colonialism. Within Bhabha's reading of colonialism, 'postcolonial' effects are produced by the agonistic ambivalence of colonialism itself, rather than the agency of the colonised. Robert Young argues that even Bhabha's notion of mimicry - in which the colonised subjects take up the guise of the coloniser - places agency within the equivocal circulation of 'colonial' constructs. In Bhabha's understanding, the mimetic performance of the colonised subject subverts colonialism not because it might be a conscious act of (mis)appropriation, but because it has a menacing effect which is produced by colonialism's own paranoia. This is then, as Young puts it, "agency without a subject".¹²⁷

Benita Parry has noted that Bhabha's recovery of the agency of the colonised is still often found, "between the lines," of colonial discourses.¹²⁸ She contends that the various documented histories of overt resistance to colonialism are displaced by articulations of subversive excess, which too closely inhabit the colonial. Rose states that, "a possible implication of Bhabha's enthusiasm for the contradictions of post/colonial discourse is that, if the dispossessed and the exiled wait long enough, dominant discourses will collapse under the weight of their own contradictions," and that he pays, "very little attention to the 'affiliative solidarities' through which the oppressed might group together in order to encourage the collapse of colonialism."¹²⁹ Put simply, Bhabha's main concern is with the field of colonial debate, rather than anticolonial discourses and formations. Such critiques are concerned with the failure of Bhabha's analysis to do justice to the politics of contestation, expressed, at the very least, as tactics of subversion but at their most striking as collective insurgencies. Jane M. Jacobs in, *Edge of Empire*, setting Bhabha's work within the wider context of postcolonial studies, summarises this particular critique:

¹²⁶ Slemon, S., 'Modernism's Last Post,' in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-colonialism and Post-modernism*, I. Adam and H. Tiffin (eds.), Harvester-Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, pp. 1-12

¹²⁷ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p.147

¹²⁸ Parry, Benita, 'Current Problems in the Study of Colonial Discourse,' *Oxford Literary Review* 9, 1 and 2, 1987, pp. 27-58

¹²⁹ Rose, 'The Interstitial Perspective,' p. 372

Bhabha's notion of the unsettling (postcolonial) surplus of colonialism is a component in a wide range of postcolonial formations which are expressed in variable ways and in distinct settings. Bhabha is right to point to the instabilities of colonialism produced by the hazy interventions made possible by the ambivalence of colonial discourse itself. But these instabilities can also arise in sharper counter-colonial movements, of say, certain nationalisms which may well mobilise essentialist notions of a precolonial identity. Furthermore, all negotiations of identity are located within very specific hierarchies of power and particular political and economic frames. . . identity-based understandings of domination need to be located in the material politics of everyday life.¹³⁰

Anthony Easthope is more extreme in his criticism of hybridity theory. Bhabha's claims to move beyond the Cartesian ego and, "open a subjectivity more able to tolerate difference", repeats, "a version of wishful thinking that is widespread among those concerned with post-structuralist thinking." Easthope asserts that, "entertaining difference' is as likely to lead to aggression, as a world without hierarchy. There was certainly no less hierarchy in the world before Descartes than there is now".¹³¹ Easthope is equally critical of Bhabha's call, "to inhabit an intervening space".¹³² Easthope highlights the need for a 'fixed' identity, pointing to, "the sad old man muttering to himself on the top of the bus [that] has fallen into the gaps coherent identity would conceal - he indeed inhabits an 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications'". Easthope concludes, "the desire for Bhabha's writing, then, consists of a fantasy of mastery, the mastery of a subject supposed to know, who can remain sure of themselves even when confronted with the appearance of hybridity on all sides - in culture, in texts, in their own subjectivity".¹³³

¹³⁰ Jacobs, Jane, *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 28

¹³¹ Easthope, Anthony, 'Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity,' *Textual Practice*, vol. 12, no. 2 1998, pp. 341-348, p. 347

¹³² Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p. 7

¹³³ Easthope, "Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity", p. 347

Perhaps, Easthope highlights a familiar reaction to hybridity theory, namely the flight from a perceived cultural relativity and a return to origins, what Jane Jacobs has called, "the claim that identity is 'given' through some uncontested inheritance or static place-based genesis."¹³⁴ Often, such claims of origin are deployed by the powerful to legitimate their rights over territory, to categorise otherness as 'outside' and to domesticate difference. As Jacobs rightly states, "claims of origin can be hegemonic."¹³⁵ Paradoxically claims of origin, such as strategies of fixing identity in place, are important for marginalised groups who want to distinguish their claims from the hegemonic. Proposing that essentialist notions of identity and place are social constructs, destabilises a whole range of claims for rights over space which are argued through the idea of origin.

How then are we to make sense of such claims to identity from the margins when the very concept of culture disintegrates into multiple positions, according to gender, age, class, ethnicity, and so on? In the present deconstructive moment, any unitary conception of a 'bounded' culture is pejoratively labelled 'naturalistic' and 'essentialist.' But the alternatives seem equally unconvincing: is 'culture' merely a false intellectual construction? The attempt to grapple with and negotiate these questions, and the ambivalence they imply is what makes the debate surrounding hybridity theory so compelling. Arguably, we have moved beyond the old discussions that start from certain identities, communities and ordered cultural categories, into uncharted theoretical waters. In a contemporary world, constituted out of the complex processes of deterritorialisation, movement and cohabitation, it may well be that what Julia Kristeva in her book, *Nations Without Nationalism* (1993), calls the, "cult of origins," needs to give way to a sense of place which is built around fractured vectors of connection and histories of disconnection.¹³⁶ Of course, what these critiques emphasise is that the assumption of a liberatory sense of hybridity is at best problematic. With these issues in mind, it was with an uncertain sense of hybridity, that I began the fieldwork in Barabazaar.

¹³⁴ Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 162

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Kristeva, Julia, *Nations Without Nationalism*, L. S. Roudiez (trans.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 2, quoted in, Jacobs, Jane, *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 163

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND TECHNIQUES

“Every Morning brings us news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling: Almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it.”

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, introduction by H. Arendt (ed.); translated by H. Zohn, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1968, p. 89

Chapter Summary

The previous chapter considered the development and evolution of recent notions of hybridity theory, acknowledging some of its limitations and possibilities. This chapter primarily deals with the fieldwork undertaken in Kolkata, and the various options and reasons behind the decisions to adopt the particular procedures used. I begin by assessing the main characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, as well as briefly describing an 'interpretive-historical' research strategy. Consistent with a qualitative research strategy, I describe the ethnographic research approaches that directed me. Next, I highlight the interlinked themes of postmodernity, postcolonialism and hybridity theory and their effects on ethnographic approaches. I also show how Mikhail Bakhtin has influenced ethnography through 'dialogic' or 'polyphonic' texts. These 'theoretical' approaches shaped my own attitudes to the 'practice' of research in the field. I describe the process of research in Kolkata taken from my own research journals. A detailed account of the fieldwork is provided covering libraries and archival sources, the courtyard house case studies, and the paper trader interviewees, as well as describing how the interviews were conducted and transcribed. In conclusion, I outline the alternative model for this study summarised in the form of ethnographic work known as a 'messy text.'

Introduction: Research Strategies

Linda Groat and David Wang in their book, *Architectural Research Methods*, describe the research strategy as, "an action plan for getting from here to there,' where *here* describes the investigator's research question(s), and *there* describes the knowledge derived from the research."¹ It would be fair to say that the research strategy for this thesis emerged simultaneously with the preliminary data collection, and initial analysis, that was undertaken on some of my first fieldwork trips to Kolkata. Indeed, it is hard to say what came first; the thesis; the strategy; the approach; or the data collection. In truth, these various stages of the

¹ Groat, Linda, and Wang, David, *Architectural Research Methods*, John Wiley and sons, inc., New York, 2002, p. 11

research process took place in an interlinked and iterative manner, with one stage reinforcing the next, although I have written about these themes separately for the sake of clarity.

Inevitably this process of negotiation led to a coherence and continuity throughout my thinking. Equally, I appreciate the inherent danger of this method, which some might think of as vague and self-referential, and perhaps leading to a loss of academic rigour. Instead, I claim that far from producing open-ended methodologies, this questioning approach has led to well defined research methods. Similarly, in the process of gathering fieldwork, what I later refer to as the 'reality of fieldwork in Barabazaar,' I argue that this course of dialogue is a necessary pre-requisite for avoiding essentialising practices. Given these caveats, the so-called 'beginning' of my research strategy, is my main thesis research aim, which as previously discussed, is to bring together Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity to particular places in Barabazaar.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research Strategies

In terms of research strategies all studies fall, wholly or partly, into one of two categories - qualitative or quantitative.² Within this model, quantitative research largely assumes an 'objective reality' and a view of the researcher as independent of the subject of inquiry. Qualitative research on the other hand, acknowledges a more 'subjective reality,' and a view of the researcher as interactive with the subject of inquiry. Groat and Wang describe further the difference between the two methods: "on a methodological level, the quantitative paradigm is seen as involving a *deductive* process of inquiry that seeks *cause-and-effect explanations*; whereas the qualitative paradigm necessitates an *inductive* process of inquiry that seeks clarification of *multiple critical factors* affecting the phenomenon."³

² For a summary of such strategies refer to: H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks, California, USA, 1994; Linda Groat, and David Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, John Wiley and sons, inc., New York, 2002; David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research A Practical Handbook*, Sage Publication, London, 2000; Max Travers, *Qualitative Research Through Case Studies*, Sage Publication, London, 2001

³ Groat, and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 26, 27

C. C. Ragin, in *Constructing Social Research*, gives a working definition of quantitative research as follows:

“Quantitative research is a basic strategy of social research that usually involves analysis of patterns of covariation across a large number of cases. This approach focuses on variables and relationships among variables in an effort to identify general patterns of covariation.”⁴

Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, in *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, offer the following ‘generic’ definition of qualitative research:

“Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials.”⁵

By ‘natural settings’ Denzin and Lincoln mean, that the objects of inquiry are not removed from the venues that surround them in everyday life. The authors of qualitative studies not only ground their work in the empirical realities of their observations and interviews, but they also make clear that they, as researchers, play an important role in interpreting and making sense of that data. Groat and Wang highlight that qualitative research, “acknowledges, rather than disavows, the role of interpretation in the collection and presentation of data.”⁶ Qualitative research involves gaining an understanding of how people in real-world situations ‘make sense’ of their environment and themselves, and it achieves this by means of a variety of techniques. Denzin and Lincoln refer to the use of multiple techniques of qualitative

⁴ Ragin, C. C., *Constructing Social Research*, Pine Forge, Thousand Oaks, California, USA, 1994, p. 190

⁵ Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvonne, *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks, California, USA, 1998, p. 3

⁶ Groat, and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 179

research as 'bricolage,' which is, "a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation."⁷

The 'cause-and-effect' explanations typical of quantitative research methods require more fixed and limited variables for testing. At its most basic, quantitative methods depend on the manipulation of phenomena that can be measured by numbers. Its methods are best suited to situations where variables are easily identifiable and controlled. Notwithstanding the author's own scepticism of the belief that, particularly in a setting like Barabazaar, the researcher can be truly independent of the subject of enquiry (themes which are developed later in this chapter), it seems clear that the quantitative method would not be particularly suited to this study, which seeks to gather data about peoples' attitudes, perceptions, and how they interpret their surroundings.

In dealing with Barabazaar, what is of concern is the number of variables, which are difficult to predict, let alone quantify and measure, as if they fell within clearly defined and identifiable parameters. The multi-focus, interpretive nature of the thesis research question, set within the complex empirical reality of Barabazaar, and the use of 'first-hand' accounts to explain a socio/ physical phenomena, highlighted that the qualitative method would be most appropriate for this study, and it was the one that was adopted. The qualitative approach offers the opportunity to be adaptable, to react flexibly to the information provided by respondents, to pursue lines of inquiry, to abandon those which appear to be heading nowhere, to probe for further information, and to go into greater depth in any one case or on any one point, where necessary. In addition, there are standard research techniques, that are available to the qualitative researcher, which afford the appropriate degree of academic rigour, and are described below.

Given the nature of this thesis and its emphasis not only on the present day lives of people who live and/ or work in Barabazaar, but also their urban histories, a second interpretive-

⁷ Denzin, and Lincoln, *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, p. 3

historical strategy was also used.⁸ Both qualitative and interpretive-historical strategies have many similarities. However, the most obvious difference between the two is temporal: whereas qualitative studies tend to focus on contemporary phenomena, interpretive-historical research has an historical focus. Whereas qualitative researchers are more likely to be concerned with data collection involving people; historians typically rely on documents and other material artefacts. Despite these differences, qualitative and interpretive-historical research remain closely related. These two strategies are often combined, in fact, so that aspects of one can augment the characteristics of the other. It is for this reason that an interpretive-historical strategy for this thesis was also chosen. It was thought that a study of contemporary environments may profit from complementary analyses of historical archives.

Ethnographic Approaches

According to Groat and Wang, “although ethnographic fieldwork was initially associated with anthropology, it has been adopted by a number of other disciplines, including sociology, human geography, organization studies, educational research, and cultural studies.”⁹ True to its anthropological roots, ethnography lays particular emphasis on the immersion of the researcher in a particular cultural context and the attempt to ascertain how those living in that context interpret their situation. Indeed often in Kolkata, I saw myself as an architect working as an anthropologist.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of ethnographic fieldwork is its reliance on ‘participant observation,’ as the primary mode of data collection. Groat and Wang give a working definition of this expression:

“Although this term is frequently used to refer to a situation in which the researcher plays a naturally occurring, established role in the situation under study, the researcher may abide by this model to varying degrees. For instance, the researcher’s identity outside the setting might be known by few

⁸ I have borrowed this term from Groat, and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 135-172

⁹ Groat, and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 182

or many; or revealed in more or less detail. The researcher may play his/ her apparent role to a greater or lesser degree; or s/ he may take the stance of either an insider or outsider. Thus, participant observation allows for enormous variation in how the researcher observes and participates in the phenomena being studied.”¹⁰

The overall characteristics of ethnographic work are fully consistent with the definition of qualitative research presented earlier in this chapter. Denzin claims that, “qualitative researchers attempt to capture and re-present, through photographs, transcribed interviews, and audiotapes the authentic, original voices heard, seen, and felt in the field setting.”¹¹ According to Groat and Wang, an ethnographic approach includes the, “exploration of a setting using context-rich detail; a reliance on unstructured (i.e. not precoded) data; a focus on a single case or small number of cases; and data analysis that emphasises, “the meanings and functions of human action.”¹²

Postmodern Ethnographies

Norman K. Denzin, in *Interpretive Ethnography*, states that, within the study of ethnography, and echoing the rise of postmodern debates (previously outlined in Chapter One), “a profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s.”¹³ According to Denzin, “the erosion of classic norms in anthropology (objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, and ethnographies as monuments to a culture) was complete.”¹⁴ Before the mid-1980’s much contemporary inquiry was organized under modernist, postpositivist

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 183, 184

¹¹ Denzin, Norman, K., *Interpretive Ethnography Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, USA, 1997, p. 32

¹² Groat, and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 182, 183

¹³ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 17. According to Denzin, this ‘rupture’ was marked by the publication of a number of books namely; G. Marcus, and M. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986; Victor Turner, and E. Bruner (eds.), *The Anthropology of Experience*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1986, James Clifford, and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986, Clifford Geertz, *Words and Lives*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1988, and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988

¹⁴ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 18

ethnographic assumptions. The modernist ethnographic text presumed a stable external social reality that could be recorded by a stable, objective, scientific observer. The modernist observer-writer mediated the many voices heard in the field and assembled them into a text that reordered reality according to a particular interpretive logic. These perspectives argued that ethnographers studied 'real' people in the 'real' world.

Perhaps the clearest systematic critique of such 'realist' ethnography was by George Marcus and Dick Cushman in an article titled, 'Ethnographies as Texts' (1982).¹⁵ They identified a number of shortcomings in early anthropological studies. One of these is that, "the existence of the individual was usually suppressed in professional ethnographic writing."¹⁶ This has some similarities to the critique made by Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1985), about the tendency of Western writers and intellectuals during the colonial period to portray people in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as an undifferentiated mass sharing cultural defects such as passivity and the inability to engage in rational thought. Another of Marcus and Cushman's criticisms is that the ethnographer, who produced the account, was usually absent, "as a first person presence in the text." Instead, they note the, "dominance . . . of the scientific (invisible or omniscient) narrator who is manifest only as a dispassionate, camera-like observer."¹⁷ According to Denzin, "unlike its postmodern counterpart, this traditional text does not attempt to connect mobile, moving, shifting minds (and their representations) to a shifting external world."¹⁸ Denzin claims that, anthropologists like Marcus and Cushman, "want us to read studies more critically, and to appreciate the different stories that could have been told, and the literary devices employed to produce what appears to be a factual or objective account."¹⁹

Arguably one of the most influential books that examined the nature of the 'rupture' in ethnography was *Writing Culture*, an edited collection of essays, by James Clifford and

¹⁵ Marcus, G., and Cushman, D, 'Ethnographies as Texts,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 11, 1982, pp. 25-69

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 32

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 31, 32

¹⁸ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 31, 32

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 157

George Marcus.²⁰ The contributions in *Writing Culture*, examine classic anthropological texts, such as Bronislaw Malinowski's, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1961), or Edward Evans-Pritchard's, *The Nuer* (1940). The book shows anthropology's links to literary theory and practice, and also how they represent a biased or partial account of social reality. Vincent Crapanzano portrays ethnographers as tricksters, promising like Hermes, not to lie, but never undertaking to tell the whole truth either.²¹ Other essays stress that cultural fictions are based on systematic, and contestable, exclusions. These may involve silencing incongruent voices, or excluding irrelevant personal or historical circumstances.

Clifford begins his introduction to *Writing Culture*, by questioning the pre-eminence of 'participant-observation' in ethnography, before examining the processes of writing ethnographies:

"We begin, not with participant-observation or with cultural texts (suitable for interpretation), but with writing, the making of texts. No longer a marginal, or occulted, dimension, writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter. . . . Writing reduced to method: keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, "writing up" results."²²

Clifford maintains that all ethnographies have literary qualities, and that influential writers such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Duvignaud, and Edmund Leach, have long shown an interest in literary theory and practice.²³ Clifford writes:

"We often hear that an author writes with style, that certain descriptions are vivid or convincing . . . A work is deemed evocative or artfully composed in

²⁰ Clifford, James, and Marcus, George E., *Writing Culture The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986. The experimental versions of ethnography that have appeared since *Writing Culture* have been vehemently criticised for being narcissistic, overly reflexive, and un-scientific; for a summary of the critical literature refer to: Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p.

xv

²¹ Crapanzano, Vincent, 'Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description,' in, Clifford, and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, pp. 51-76

²² Clifford, and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, p. 2

²³ *ibid.*, p. 3

addition to being factual; expressive, rhetorical functions are conceived as decorative or merely as ways to present an objective analysis or description more effectively.”²⁴

Controversially, Clifford argues that the texts in his collection should be viewed not as contributions to science, but as ‘ethnographic fictions’:

“To call ethnographies fictions may raise empiricist hackles. But the world as commonly used in recent textual theory has lost its connotation of falsehood, of something merely opposed to truth. It suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive. Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of ‘something made up or fashioned,’ the principle burden of the word’s Latin root, *fingere*. But it is important to preserve the [additional] meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not actually real.”²⁵

According to Clifford, “ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial* - committed and incomplete.”²⁶ He gives as an example of a work by Richard Price, called *First Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (1983), which according to Clifford, “offers a good example of self-conscious, serious partiality.”²⁷ Price recounts the specific conditions of his fieldwork. We learn about external and self-imposed limits to the research, about individual participants, and about the construction of the final artefact. According to Clifford, and echoing Bakhtin, “the book avoids a smoothed-over, monological form, presenting itself as literally pieced-together, full of holes.”²⁸ Thus for Clifford, “it soon becomes apparent that no “complete” corpus of First-Time knowledge, that no one - least of all the visiting ethnographer - can know this lore except through an open-ended series of contingent, power-

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 4

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*,

laden encounters.”²⁹ According to Clifford, “though Price himself is not free of the desire to write a complete ethnography or history, to portray a “whole way of life,” the message of partiality resonates throughout *First Time*.”³⁰

Denzin believes that, “a triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis confronts qualitative researchers in the human disciplines,”³¹ which makes problematic two key assumptions of qualitative research. The first assumption presumes that qualitative researchers can no longer directly capture lived experience. For Denzin, “this is the representational crisis.”³² The second assumption makes problematic the traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research. For Denzin, “this is the legitimation crisis,” and, “involves a serious rethinking of such terms as validity, generalizability, and reliability.”³³ Denzin postulates that, “the question from this crisis is, How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the contemporary, poststructural moment?” The first two crises shape the third, which questions, “is it possible to effect change in the world, if society is only and always a text?”³⁴

Dialogic/ Polyphonic Ethnographies

An experimental form of writing that has influenced contemporary ethnography is the ‘dialogic’ or ‘polyphonic’ method, which is part inspired by the writings of Bakhtin. According to Denzin, Bakhtin, “anticipates the postmodernist text - a text based on parallax of discourses in which nothing is ever stable or capable of firm and certain representation.”³⁵ The central idea is that, instead of imposing his or her authority on a text as an impersonal narrator, the author should withdraw and let the subjects speak for themselves. For Bakhtin, writing in his collection of essays, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986), all discourse (everyday speech, poetry, drama, novels, music, and scientific articles) is contextual, immediate, and grounded

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 3

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 4

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 36

in the specifics of the situation.³⁶ For Bakhtin, no text or speech can be repeated without a change in meaning, and in context. Each attempt at repetition creates a new experience. (Much of this argument has been made in the previous chapter, in the section describing Bakhtin's linguistic hybridity.)

Comprehension of a text or speech is made possible only when two speakers enter into a dialogic relationship with one another. In this relationship, each person becomes a party to the utterances of the other. For Denzin, "together the two speakers create a small, dialogical world of unique meaning and experience."³⁷ For anthropologists, the lesson is that 'the world' cannot be reduced to mere transcripts, instead it must be treated as a slice of experience unique to itself. According to Denzin,

"An outside observer has no place in this dialogue. Only by entering into the dialogue can understanding be gained. Even then understanding will be problematic."³⁸

Bakhtin shows that dialogical processes proliferate in any complexly represented discursive space (that of an ethnography, or, in his case a realist novel). Many voices clamour for expression. As Clifford and Marcus highlight:

"Polyvocality was restrained and orchestrated in traditional *ethnographies* by giving to one voice a pervasive authorial function and to others the role of sources, "informants," to be quoted or paraphrased. Once dialogism and polyphony are recognized as modes of textual production, monophonic authority is questioned, revealed to be characteristic of a science that has claimed to *represent* cultures. The tendency to specify discourses -

³⁶ Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986

³⁷ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 38

³⁸ *ibid.*

historically and intersubjectively - recasts this authority, and in the process alters the questions we put to cultural descriptions.”³⁹

Clifford and Marcus give an example of dialogical discourse in anthropological writings, namely, James Walker’s classic monograph, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Sioux* (1917).⁴⁰ Three titles have now appeared in a four-volume edition of documents he collected, while a physician and ethnographer on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation between 1896 and 1914.⁴¹ The first, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (1982), is a collage of notes, interviews, texts, and essay fragments, written or spoken by Walker and numerous Oglala collaborators. According to Clifford and Marcus,

“This volume lists more than thirty “authorities,” and wherever possible each contribution is marked with the name of its enunciator, writer, or transcriber. These individuals are not ethnographic “informants.” *Lakota Belief* is a collaborative work of documentation, edited in a manner that gives equal rhetorical weight to diverse renditions of tradition. Walker’s own descriptions and glosses are fragments among fragments.”⁴²

The result is a version of culture in process that resists any final summation. For Clifford and Marcus, “taken together, these works offer an unusual, multiply articulated record of Lakota life at a crucial moment in its history - a three-volume anthology of ad hoc interpretations and transcriptions by more than a score of individuals.”⁴³ Here the ethnographer no longer holds unquestioned rights of salvage: the authority long associated with bringing elusive, ‘disappearing’ oral lore into legible textual form. It is unclear whether James Walker (or anyone) can appear as author of these writings. Western texts conventionally come with

³⁹ Clifford, and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, p. 15

⁴⁰ Walker, James, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Sioux*, AMS Press, New York, 1979

⁴¹ Walker, James; *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, Raymond J. DeMallie (ed.), University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1982; *Lakota Society*, Raymond J. DeMallie (ed.), University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1982; *Lakota Myth*, Elaine A. Jahner (ed.), University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1983

⁴² Clifford, and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, p. 15

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 16

authors attached. Walker's work may be an unusual case of textual collaboration, but it helps us to see behind the scenes. As Clifford and Marcus point out, "informants' begin to be considered as co-authors, and the ethnographer as scribe and archivist as well as interpreting observer, we can ask new, critical questions of all ethnographies."⁴⁴

Postcolonial/ Hybrid Ethnographies

Naturally, postcolonial theory questions the ethnographic text that speaks with authority for 'others,' often defined as unable to speak for themselves. Ethnographic work has long been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities and it continues to be implicated. As Clifford and Marcus comment, its power relations are, "complex, often ambivalent, potentially counter-hegemonic."⁴⁵ 'Other' groups can no longer easily be represented as if they were not involved in present world systems that implicate ethnographers along with the peoples they study. Clifford and Marcus state:

"'Cultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship."⁴⁶

In three major texts, *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), *When the Moon Waxes Red* (1991), and *Framer Framed* (1992), as well as four films, *Reassemblage* (1982), *Naked Spaces - Living is Round* (1985), *Surname Viet given Name Nam* (1989), and *Shoot for the Contents* (1991), Trinh T. Minh-Ha contests the often exclusively masculine standpoint that organises mainstream, and postmodern, interpretive anthropology.⁴⁷ According to Minh-Ha, in her book,

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 9

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 10

⁴⁷ Minh-Ha, Trinh T., *Woman, Native, Other Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989; *When the Moon Waxes Red Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991; *Framer Framed*, Routledge, New York and London, 1992. For an overview of her films refer to: Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, USA, 1997, pp. 75-78

When the Moon Waxes Red, ethnography has traditionally functioned as that method that allows the writer to, "grasp the native's point of view," and, "to realize *his* vision of *his* world."⁴⁸ Such texts, never question where the anthropologist stands vis-à-vis his interpretive community, and the natives he writes about. According to Minh-Ha, "to put oneself into someone else's skin," is not without difficulty.⁴⁹ She continues:

"The natural outcome of such a rationale is the arranged marriage between "experience-distant" and "experience-near," between the scientist's objectivity and the native's subjectivity, between outsider's input and insider's output. To get at the most intimate, hidden notions of the Other's self, the man has to rely on a form of (neo-)colonial interdependency."⁵⁰

The reflective ethnographer has little choice than to work within a 'hybrid reality.' For Minh-Ha, writing in her book, *Framer Framed*, "In the complex reality of postcoloniality it is therefore vital to assume one's radical "impurity" and to recognize the necessity of speaking from a hybrid place, hence of saying at least two, three things at a time."⁵¹ A certain identity is never possible; the ethnographer must always ask, not "*Who* am I?," but "*When, where, how* am I (so and so)?"⁵² According to Denzin, Minh-Ha's standpoint is, "fragile, illusive, and plural."⁵³ For Minh-Ha writing as a Vietnamese woman living in America, the figure of postcolonial woman always writes from a position of triple jeopardy: "as a writer, as a woman, and as a woman of colour."⁵⁴ She is always crossing borders, moving through in-between spaces, a hyphen, a hybrid, Asian American woman, African American feminist,⁵⁵ constantly negotiating, "the difference not merely between cultures, between First and Third World, but

⁴⁸ Minh-Ha, Trinh T., *When the Moon Waxes Red Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991, p. 65

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 67

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 68

⁵¹ Minh-Ha, Trinh T., *Framer Framed*, Routledge, New York and London, 1992, p. 140

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 157

⁵³ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 72

⁵⁴ Minh-Ha, Trinh T., *Woman, Native, Other Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, p. 28

⁵⁵ Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, p. 157

more importantly within culture . . . a plural singularity . . . [that problematises] the insider-outsider position.”⁵⁶

For Minh-Ha, she is not the subaltern other, nor can she assume the place of the insider, or enter the standpoint of the outsider, because these spaces also do not exist, except as processes.⁵⁷ Minh-Ha explains her ‘hybrid place’:

“She knows she is different while at the same time being Him. Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly rifts in and out. Undercutting the insider/ outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both the deceptive insider and the deceptive outsider.”⁵⁸

Minh-Ha seeks to undo the ‘realist’ ethnographic project, and questions the gender-neutral (or masculine) self within the ethnographers story about the ‘other.’ Denzin, quoting C. Springer, observes that, what is suppressed in the seeing-knowing equation is the fact, “that interpretations are produced in cultural, historical, and personal contexts and are always shaped by the interpreter’s values.”⁵⁹ Clifford and Marcus reiterate that, “no one reads from a neutral or final position.”⁶⁰ Her work underlies the fact that ethnography is often a gendered subject. This thesis gives relatively little attention to ethnographic possibilities emerging from feminist theory and politics, not because the author saw little use for such ideas, rather because of the lack of opportunities offered in the field. In this sense, this study remains a limited intervention, with no aspiration to be comprehensive or to cover the territory. In Clifford and Marcus’s terminology, “it sheds a strong partial light.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Minh-Ha, *Framer Framed*, p. 144

⁵⁷ Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, p. 74

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Springer, C., “Comprehension and Crisis: Reporter Films and the Third World,” in Friedman, L.D. (ed.), *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, pp. 167-189, p. 178, and taken from, Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 35

⁶⁰ Clifford, and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, p. 18

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 21

Indeed one might question how as a white European male it is possible to begin to understand a place like Barabazaar. Minh-Ha's work in particular, highlights the need not only to avoid essentialising the 'other' but also to resist the urge to essentialise the 'self.' For Minh-Ha, writing in *When the Moon Waxes Red*, "the question, rather, is that of tracking down and exposing the Voice of Power and Censorship whenever and whichever side it appears,"⁶² Thus for the white European male anthropologist-architect, the predicament of crossing boundaries cannot be merely rejected or accepted. Perhaps more intricately, as Minh-Ha confesses, "it has to be confronted in its controversies."⁶³ Perhaps the most obvious example of the impact of my training and the 'culture of architecture' is my relatively conventional choice of architectural typologies like the house, street, and marketplace, as well as my pre-occupation with 'public' and 'private' space.

Fieldwork

Four fieldwork trips were made to Kolkata. The first one, an initial pilot study, lasted for two weeks, over the Easter of 1999. The second was for two months, over the summer of 2000, and the third for one month, over the summer of 2001. During these latter two trips, the bulk of the research was completed. The fourth and final trip was for three weeks, over Easter 2003, when 'loose ends' were 'pulled together.' Dividing the research period up into smaller time periods was the only way I could manage my fieldwork between job and home commitments, and as well as anything, reflected the 'part-time' nature of my PhD. Following the classic anthropological methods of 'participant observation,' and long before I really understood that I could never be a 'neutral observer,' I had originally hoped to stay as a paying guest, and 'interpreter-observer' in a household in Barabazaar. On the two longer trips I did live as a paying guest with middle-class Bengalis families. However these were in houses outside of Barabazaar. Indeed, in no sense could I claim to have lived with the people I studied.

⁶² Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, p. 72, 73

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 157

I followed rigorously two practices on all my fieldwork trips. Firstly, I always introduced myself to people with a card, which meant I invariably received a card with contact details in return. Secondly, in a gesture to the anthropological aspects of my work and despite the reservations expressed by Clifford and Marcus, I kept a daily journal recording reflections on each days events, before they were forgotten (figure 3.1). I found writing in a journal often captured the initial vividness and colour of an experience. Sometimes journals provided answers, but more often than not, there were loose-ends, frustrations and incomplete thoughts, and if I was lucky, amongst a lot of tedious detail, that seemed important at the time, some provisional conclusions. Journals can remind you of past thoughts you had and may have forgotten about, and provide a way of reflecting on and connecting seemingly disparate events over several trips. They are extraordinarily good at enabling you to reflect on and draw conclusions, to see things with hindsight, that is never possible, or rarely happens in the heat of the moment. They also highlight the more fictional roots of my work.

Participants' Confidentiality

Researchers need to be sensitive to the likely impact of their work on those involved. Jennifer Mason asserts that, "the rich and detailed character of much qualitative research can mean intimate engagement with the public and private lives of individuals."⁶⁴ Whether research is done *on* people or whether it is done *with* them there is the possibility that their lives could be affected in some way through the fact of them having participated. As Denscombe acknowledges, "findings from research can have consequences - political, commercial, personal."⁶⁵ There is a duty on researchers, therefore, to work in a way that minimises the prospect of their research having an adverse effect on those who are involved.

⁶⁴ Mason, Jennifer, *Qualitative Researching*, Sage Publications, London, 1996, p. 166-7, quoted in, Silverman, David, *Interpreting Qualitative Data Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction* (Second Edition), Sage Publications, London, 2001, p. 270

⁶⁵ Denscombe, Martynne, *Ground Rules for Good Research*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 2002, p. 177

~~Professor~~ ~~30th~~ Abin Kung mentioned the society for Preservation, Calcutta had been set up. I decided to go to preserve the town that will be the first with dedication. The friend of the town that was the first culture ~~to~~ ^{to} Calcutta.

have ~~got~~ ^{to} know about 4 people. Mr. Khatun was there also Khatun, Manish Chakravorty, Abin Kung. The lecture itself was a list of dates and facts not all that digested and because of that quite hard to take in. Khatun comes across as a very single-minded dedicated scholar. As per usual I attended a lot of attention and I met someone called Mr. Siddiqui who is writing a book which brings together people's (peoples) experiences of Calcutta. After some tea and a chat, and some flattery on his part, I agreed to do an interview with him, sometime before I leave (yikes). We went off to see a friend of his who lives in Carnatic Street - a Bengali who prefers to speak in English. He had married in desperation (his words) a disabled woman who's personality had worsened soon after she ~~became~~ ^{was} Bengali.

He is looking for a English loving Bengali woman and agreed he had very high expectations!

died 10 years later of a rue from of TB. He hated Bengalis for one reason. I think there were some deep psychological reasons which I wasn't going to go into here. After all how we left. I was tired but my new found friend wanted to have a meal with me. Against my better judgement we went into a cheap restaurant. It was not for a very cheap meal which was not pleasant. Left swiftly anxious to get back to bed. Turned out to be a long day. This pass I've been going through for the last 6-7 weeks feels like I'm sowing seeds, waiting for them to mature. Well I just can't I thought I could just harvest - hadn't realized I had to find the seeds and where to plant them before getting to point of harvest!

I was introduced to P.T. Khatun, who said he had ~~the~~ ^{some} everything he knew about

be able to help - couldn't tell if might be a wild goose chase. I showed him one of my plans, he was a little dismissive of their lack of detail. What was the wall thickness ~~about~~ ^{about} ~~thick~~ ^{thick} ~~to~~ ^{to} Bengali roofing, a ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~pride~~ ^{pride} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~do~~ ^{do} from these things. He was asking Manish similar questions. I must arrange to see some of these houses in the north of Calcutta with Gopinath Gosh. DKL sounded like a bit of a prick of the architectural discipline.

To do: ~~Improve~~ ^{Improve} ~~22.7.01~~ ^{22.7.01}

- * Get ~~fixed~~ ^{fixed} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~fundations~~ ^{fundations} + ~~show~~ ^{show} ~~mean~~ ^{mean}
- * ~~email~~ ^{email} ~~about~~ ^{about} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~project~~ ^{project}
- * ~~prepare~~ ^{prepare} ~~so~~ ^{so} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~project~~ ^{project}
- * ~~contact~~ ^{contact} ~~HOPC~~ ^{HOPC}
- * ~~Gain~~ ^{Gain} ~~brother's~~ ^{brother's} ~~plans~~ ^{plans}
- * ~~Go~~ ^{Go} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~house~~ ^{house} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}
- * ~~visit~~ ^{visit} ~~SK~~ ^{SK} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~interview~~ ^{interview}
- * ~~fill~~ ^{fill} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~gap~~ ^{gap} ~~on~~ ^{on} ~~home~~ ^{home} ~~survey~~ ^{survey}
- * ~~Long~~ ^{Long} ~~planner~~ ^{planner} ~~first~~ ^{first} ~~week~~ ^{week} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~August~~ ^{August}
- * ~~Get~~ ^{Get} ~~more~~ ^{more} ~~input~~ ^{input}
- * ~~Ring~~ ^{Ring} ~~Chakravorty~~ ^{Chakravorty} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~chapter~~ ^{chapter}
- * ~~Ring~~ ^{Ring} ~~Debnath~~ ^{Debnath} ~~Nazim~~ ^{Nazim}
- * ~~Ring~~ ^{Ring} ~~Khatun~~ ^{Khatun} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~Abin~~ ^{Abin} ~~Kung~~ ^{Kung}
- * ~~O.P.~~ ^{O.P.} ~~Thirani~~ ^{Thirani}
- * ~~Survey~~ ^{Survey} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}
- * ~~Ring~~ ^{Ring} ~~Prabhat~~ ^{Prabhat} ~~Ravindra~~ ^{Ravindra} ~~interview~~ ^{interview}
- * ~~fill~~ ^{fill} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~gaps~~ ^{gaps} ~~on~~ ^{on} ~~home~~ ^{home} ~~survey~~ ^{survey}
- * ~~Visit~~ ^{Visit} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~house~~ ^{house} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}
- * ~~Editing~~ ^{Editing} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~revising~~ ^{revising} ~~chapters~~ ^{chapters}
- * ~~Go~~ ^{Go} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~house~~ ^{house} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}
- * ~~Go~~ ^{Go} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~house~~ ^{house} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}
- * ~~Go~~ ^{Go} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~house~~ ^{house} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~area~~ ^{area}

3.1 Extracts from research journals. 24 August 2000 and 22 July 2001

Denscombe states that, "It is normal good practice to avoid publishing reports of the research which allow individuals or organizations to be identified either by name or by role."⁶⁶ However, Denscombe goes on to outline two potentially conflicting interests facing researchers, as follows:

"They must publish details about their methods of data collection. This is fundamental to the notion of 'research' because, without such details, others in the research community would be unable to evaluate the work or do anything to check the validity of the findings. However, providing such details can run the risk of revealing the identities of those who contributed to the data. To get round the dilemma, researchers will often use pseudonyms, rather than real names of places, people and organizations."⁶⁷

There are limits to how far researchers can go to protect the identity of participants without jeopardising the integrity of the data and quality of the researcher's analysis. Denscombe admits that, "the better the identities of those involved are disguised the more difficult it becomes to check the validity of the data."⁶⁸ Other researchers are less able to compare the findings with similar instances since some of the details of the original have been deliberately altered or withheld. Denscombe concludes that researchers should be alert, "to the point that alterations done to honour promises about the confidentiality of the data can generate some conflict of interest between the desire to act ethically and the need to retain the integrity of the data."⁶⁹

During all interviews and visits in Barabazaar, I would outline the following information to participants:

- Who I was and where I was from
- The purpose of the study

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 180

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 181

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 182

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

- The basis on which the participant had been selected to take part
- What the participation entailed (e.g. being interviewed, surveyed, photographed)
- The time and effort needed by those whose collaboration was being sought
- The purpose for which the data would be used

During the fieldwork, there were three groups of participants, where research confidentiality could be considered an important issue. These were: the courtyard house owners; the market traders; and a small group of other participants who provided supporting data for the study. The courtyard house owners were impossible to anonymise as their houses were photographed and surveyed 'in-situ,' and I have made no attempt to do so. To have done otherwise would have meant the absence of much valuable data. Naturally all the courtyard house owners were told their houses would be identified in this study. Neither, have I anonymised public organisations. The market traders have been anonymised, as traders A - F, as have the small group of other participants, as participants W and X.

This being said, much of my research was never strictly confidential. All the paper traders knew each other, and that they were being interviewed. There is a lot of essential personal information contained in the study that makes each of the traders readily identifiable to those that took part. I would constantly tell people I met for the first time, from whom I had heard about them, for reasons that are explained in the next section. Despite this, I decided that a degree of confidentiality should be maintained, partial though it is. Inevitably, my approach to participants confidentiality was something of a hybrid one.

Process and Networks

Looking back, it seems naive but it took me a while to realise that my research was first and foremost an exercise in building trust and friendship. When I first arrived in Kolkata, and rather conventionally, I thought that I would spend my time gathering, or 'harvesting' information for my PhD. I had not realised that I had to find the seeds first and where to plant

them, before getting to that point of 'harvest'. On my second trip to Kolkata in the summer of 2000, the process of research I went through felt very much like the first stage of planting.

Sunand Prasad acknowledges that, "in India the helping hand of the intermediary seems to be an ever present fact of life whatever it is that one wants to do." In a useful insight he confirms that, "every verb in Hindi - as in most other Indian languages - has a derivative form which means 'to get someone else to . . .'. So 'kerna' (to do) and 'kervana' (to get done); 'hansna'/'hansvana' (laugh/ make laugh); 'lana'/'livana' (bring/ to get someone to bring)."⁷⁰ Anne Hardgrove describes the nature of her research in Kolkata as, "appointment anthropology."⁷¹ She explains this idea in more detail as follows:

"I never called anyone up "cold" without having first had a proper introduction from someone else, either with a letter or preferably a phone call. These introductions, I felt, help grant me both social legitimacy (of being taken seriously) and also social protection. Getting started on this networking process took time. . Still using this process of "appointment anthropology" I met dozens of families . . ."⁷²

Thus I spent my time developing networks with many intermediaries. Admittedly, they were all people that I met by chance rather than design. I doubt very much whether they are what could be called a 'representative sample.' I met these people through four organisations, namely; The Rotary Club of Kolkata; Kolkata Numismatics Society; Society for the Preservation of Kolkata; and, The Foundation for the Conservation of Rural and Urban Traditional Architecture (CRUTA). This reflects what I admit is a very partial view of Barabazaar.

⁷⁰ Prasad, Sunand, *The Havelis of North India, The Urban Courtyard House*, PhD Thesis, The Royal College of Art, London, 1998, p. 2.6

⁷¹ Hardgrove, Anne, *Community as Public Culture in Modern India: The Marwaris in Calcutta, c. 1897-1997*, PhD in anthropology and History, University of Michigan, 1999, p. 27. Hardgrove acknowledges that she borrows this term from T. M. Luhrman, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1996

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 27, 28

Kalyan Kumar Deb was my first port of call in Kolkata in Easter 1999. I had been put in touch with him because of his links to CRUTA, who had completed a report on north Kolkata, and had also looked at Barabazaar. Mr. Deb was a Rotarian and introduced me one Saturday evening, at a local meeting to fellow Rotarians in north Kolkata (22 July 2000). One of the people I met there, Mr. O. P. Thirani, introduced me to another Rotarian, Mr. Prabhat Rohatgi, and I gained entrance to my first courtyard house. A friend of Mr. Rohatgi's, Mr Gopinath Ghosh, another Rotarian, gave me Mr. Abhik Ray's telephone number. Mr. Ray was chairman of the Society for the Preservation of Kolkata. Mr. Ray put me in touch with trader A, a fellow member of the Society, and of the Kolkata Numismatics Society. Trader A introduced me to all the paper traders I subsequently interviewed, and to Bani Bhusan Chakravorty, who in turn took me around many of the courtyard houses I visited, most of whom he knew as fellow members of the Kolkata Numismatics Society.

This description of establishing networks of participants constructed with the benefit of hindsight, and after my story had been somewhat consolidated, makes the process seem simple and rational. In reality, there were many dead ends and doors shut in my face. I managed in total to develop some 55 contacts. Many people who seemed potentially very useful at the start turned out not to be, and similarly there were those who seemed very unpromising on first meeting, but turned out to be useful later on. In essence, the process was unpredictable. Initially information was hard to come by and often involved long and protracted negotiation. The reasons for this were not always immediately self-evident and initially often difficult to judge. Understandably, people were suspicious and wary of me as a 'foreigner.' At first, I do not think I was fully prepared for the more conservative nature of Indian society. Sometimes I felt that people treated information as a hard won resource and jealously guarded the little bit they had. Certainly when I had a bit of my own knowledge and became more familiar, people were more interested in me, and more willing to exchange what they had.

It was often difficult to know from a first meeting whether contacts would be useful or not. The first meeting would often be a 'getting to know you session'. People would want to know what

you wanted and why you were there before giving much away. There were times during my visits when I was unsure how it would all turn out. I wrote in my journal of 28 August 2000, that I thought the trip was a "bit of a gamble," and, that, "I do feel a bit exposed, insecure here in that I can never see further than 1-2 weeks ahead - never quite sure what's around the corner good or bad." Initially, I thought that it would be possible to do some close unobserved study. This proved to be unrealistic and virtually impossible. As I wrote in my journal of 19 July 2000 pointing out some of my dilemmas:

"Most often I'm the subject of curiosity sometimes I sense ridicule. The camera draws most attention, changing film even more so - but unfortunately it's a necessary evil. The most unobtrusive way is making notes on a small piece of paper, but still people stop and look at what you are doing. Avoiding eye contact reduces much of this attention. Inevitably, trying to avoid unwanted attention you put the shutters up."

The 'reality of fieldwork' in the often crowded conditions of Barabazaar seemed to frustrate any attempts to fade into the background. I wrote in my journal of 11 August 2000, "when you're out taking photographs you don't half feel invasive, especially when you have to stick the camera in peoples face all the time just to photograph buildings in these congested streets." However, there were days when the weather worked to my advantage. I wrote on 21 July 2000, "went to Barabazaar in heavy rain, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I certainly felt less conspicuous partly hidden by the umbrellas, but also I think people have their heads down looking out for puddles."

During my second visit in the summer of 2000, I reflected on how sources were scattered and how finding them was a fairly ad-hoc and uncertain process. However there seemed to be little alternative than to pursue this route. At this stage, it seemed like most things had to be done, almost always from scratch. There were history societies that I had connected with (Society for the Preservation of Kolkata), where somebody might be able to tell you something about one particular aspect of the subject and somebody else, something different.

This process relied very heavily on you being able to tell somebody exactly what you are after (which of course you might not always know), them being able to understand you correctly, and them remembering who might be able to help. In other words, it was a process heavily reliant on chance. Inevitably there were wasted visits meeting people, but equally sometimes unexpected successes.

An illustration of the piece-meal nature of research in Kolkata was a collection of shop receipts that I saw, which was owned by trader A. I had arranged unsuccessfully on several occasions to see his collection because I thought it might give an interesting perspective on Barabazaar. I wrote in my journal of 26 August 2000:

"I went to see trader A at 12 PM. sweating profusely to look at his receipts, which proved fascinating. He did not switch the fan on due to the fragility of the documents. I did my best not to drip on them. We must have looked through about 50 of them, mostly old English firms from the 19th century in the Dalhousie Square area. He said he had collected them from shops where he had just gone in and asked for them. Others were collected more by luck.

Once he was walking past the offices of a solicitors (whose name I have forgotten), located in the Insurance Building, next to the main GPO building in Dalhousie Square, and they were just throwing out bags full of these bills and receipts. He paid RS 100 for a man to deliver them to his house."

Time and again, I felt I was the first person down a particular research track. Whilst I enjoyed the sense of making those first connections and finding my own path, there were times when it was all too daunting. In Kolkata, there is none of that security or reassurance that comes with doing research where one knows that there are many people around that are doing a similar thing. Although there is little 'hard' information to be found, conversely there are relatively few people to be seen. Like so many places, the same set of people attend and mix at the same cultural events.

During my third visit in the summer of 2001, the work continued in much the same vein as the previous year, and I continued to develop networks of contacts. On this trip, I took photographs of my family, to show people that I had met the previous year and felt a little closer to. Having asked a lot of personal information about peoples' lives, I wanted to show something of a more personal nature in return. The research was still the same ad hoc and informal process as previous trips. An entry in my journal dated 21 July 2001, illustrated this:

"I met a Mr. Dudhoria, who had remembered me from Mr. Beed's gathering last year. He said he would make enquiries at the College Street Coffee House to see if anybody could help with my study. . . I started the day feeling disappointed that Professor D. K. L. Choudhury could offer me few new leads, but ended it thinking that a whole new network might be emerging. There really is no other way of doing this sort of research than staying open to the belief that a chance encounter could lead to new avenues opening."

On another occasion, I spoke to Dr. Samar Bagchi about Nandalal Guin, a well known Kolkata architect, from the first half of the twentieth century. Dr. Bagchi went through 'Guins' in the telephone directory, and by chance came across a company called, N. Guin and Co. Ltd.. When he called them, they said that Nandalal Guin was their grandfather, and yes I should go and talk to them.

A conversation with Mr. Madhukar Deogawanka, about a book he had written on a postal system devised by a group of Brahmins in an area of Rajasthan, seemed to confirm this hit-and-miss research process. I recorded what he said, in my journal of 31 July 2001:

"He said the book took twenty years of 'digging.' He understood only too well, the problems of research in India. He said many people do not trust you at first. They think you are going to steal from them, or report them to the authorities, or use the information in some way against them. The information

is scattered everywhere. Some days you visit 3 or 4 people for six lines in the book."

However, on later trips the work seemed a lot less daunting. I suspect this was partly because I realised and accepted that this was the way things worked in Kolkata. Also, I felt I was further on with the work, and it did not feel like such a mountain to climb. With the benefit of hindsight, I think that on previous trips, what I was really doing was building foundations for the study, although at the time I did not realise how useful and necessary it was. At the time, I believed I was going nowhere fast, without seeing any tangible results.

On the final trip over the Easter of 2003, I was a little hesitant about its purpose. I was influenced in part by my teaching load at the time, and the very real pressure to produce tangible research outputs for a probationary report at Newcastle University. Before I left Newcastle, I was a little preoccupied with such thoughts, and about what other 'more productive' things I could be doing, if I was not in Kolkata. Of course, what I found when I got to Kolkata was that I forgot all of this, as I began to meet people who were really interested in what I was doing in Barabazaar, for no other reason than out of intellectual curiosity. It was a useful reminder about my own original motivation for doing the PhD in the first place, albeit perhaps with hindsight a little idealistic.

In the end I felt fully justified in completing this final trip. If nothing else it was useful in terms of confirming a lot of the things I had already been writing about away from Kolkata and also gave me more confidence that I was indeed on the right track. The trip also reminded me about some of the things I had missed out, or overlooked. After seeing a Marwari courtyard house in Barabazaar, built at the beginning of the twentieth century, I realised that I made very little mention of them in an early draft of Chapter six that I had written before the trip, nor made much mention of the differences to their Bengali neighbours, built mostly earlier in the nineteenth century. Another set of interviews that I conducted with paper traders seemed to give a different and more optimistic picture about the state of the paper trade in Barabazaar, from the previous trip. At a Rotary club meeting I was invited to, by Mr Rohatgi, I was

reminded of the perceived differences between north and south Kolkatans, that often coloured peoples comments on my work in Barabazaar and that I had forgotten about also. I recorded my impressions of this Rotary Club meeting in my journal on 8 March 2003:

“They were all a bit snobby about north Kolkata and I heard all the familiar stories about not trusting what, “anything anybody told me up there,” it would be difficult to get into those houses, there was no one left who knew about life up there etc. etc.”

On the final trip, there were also unexpected and unplanned events that I managed to go to. I was fortunate to be asked to an urban design workshop over one weekend for the Dalhousie Square area. As well as making some useful contacts, it gave me a comprehensive overview of the developing building conservation movement in the city amongst architectural practitioners, and some students from Jadavpur University. After eighteen months absence following the previous trip, I was expecting some of my contacts to have cooled a little, but far from it - people seemed to be volunteering to do more things for me. Inevitably, I sensed that coming back to Kolkata over several occasions had given me increased legitimacy, and made me seem more serious about what I was doing in the eyes' of the friends I had made.

Libraries and Archival Sources

Research for this PhD involved work in a number of libraries and archives in both the United Kingdom and India (figure 3.2). The bulk of the research for chapters four and five involved library and archival work, although all chapters drew on this research to a greater or lesser extent as well. All textual sources were in English, although English translations of Bengali/Hindu texts were used as well.

The Robinson Library, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne
The Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library, London
Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Edinburgh

West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata
The Asiatic Society, Kolkata
The National Library, Kolkata
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata

3.2. Table of libraries and archives used by the author

In Kolkata, there was a limited amount of information centralised in massively under-resourced, and overly bureaucratic libraries. Getting a book out required patience and determination, and sometimes more than one visit. Even when you find something in the catalogue, there was no guarantee that after a wait of several hours, the book would not be there, or be covered in mildew, or have been half-eaten by white ants. Some insights into working in libraries are taken from my journal during August 2000:

"I went briefly to the Asiatic Society before heading to the National Library where I waited ¾ hour to look at a book then another half hour to get a form for photocopying. I have to go back tomorrow after 5 PM to pick up the photocopies. The Asiatic Society photocopying is slightly quicker, although I had to get my form signed by 4 people - firstly the man on the issue desk who gave me the form, then the man on the exit desk who let me go to another part of the building, the photocopying man who calculates how much it is, then the cash desk to pay for it, then back to the photocopying man to pick up the copies." (2 August 2000)

The next day I went to the National Library to pick up my photocopies:

"The man was quarter of an hour late, but arrived with my copies full of cheer having recognized me from the day before. Of course I had to sign another form to say I had received them which was countersigned by two other people". (3 August 2000)

There were other days when I was more lucky:

"I went to the National library in the afternoon and (I take it all back) they had both my books in and sent up within 3/4 hour. A very helpful librarian looked after me asking if I had received my books. I then went and arranged to have the relevant bits photocopied - all went surprisingly smoothly. Have to go back on Friday evening or Monday morning for photocopies." (10 August 2000)

On one occasion I managed to arrange for a microfiche to be made of a particularly fragile document.

"I went off to the library reprographics department to pick up my microfiche roll not quite knowing whether it would be there. When I got there it was waiting for me. It then began to slowly dawn on me the guy who had done the job wanted some 'extra money.' He had of course asked for me to see only him, and kept on going on about having done it at his 'own personal risk'. I couldn't understand why it was all so risky? He said he would meet me in the canteen, and after I had got through the security gate he was there. In the end it was all a bit half hearted on his side. He mentioned how it had cost more than the original RS 50 quoted. I had always thought he had made this original sum up anyway. I played the ignorant foreigner and walked off into the rain." (17 August 2000)

During the second trip made in the summer of 2000, I more or less reached the limit of information contained in Kolkata's libraries. I did think that the lack of information was restricted to English language sources rather than Bengali/ Hindi, but was told by reliable sources in Kolkata (librarians and historians), that it is the same in these other languages too. One librarian asked me why I was not doing my research on Kolkata at the British Library, where there was much more information. During the second trip, I went to a lecture given by the eminent Kolkata historian P. T. Nair, where he explained that he had written his dozen or so books on Kolkata, without once visiting the British Library. My feeling was that probably he could have done them a lot quicker if he had.

The Courtyard House Case Studies

The bulk of the research for Chapter six involved surveying courtyard houses all over Barabazaar. Around the streets of Barabazaar, courtyard houses number in the hundreds in varying states of repair and architectural significance (figure 3.3). Broadly speaking they fall into two categories. The first and most common is a multi-storeyed building, from four to seven storeys, with businesses on the ground floor, and families on each floor above, renting anything from one to several rooms (figures 3.4, 3.5). I estimated that 80-90% of the courtyard houses in Barabazaar were of this type, often with several landlords and informal, confused, and ambiguous tenancy agreements. Indeed, many seemed to contain squatters with no agreements at all. When several landlords own a property, negotiating entrance is difficult. Tenants living arrangements are often precarious and insecure and for these reasons, they are suspicious of 'outsiders' or anybody who looks, or acts 'official'. For an Indian doing what I was doing could often be dangerous work. In an interview with participant X, of 11 August 2000, he described the process he went through to obtain information to complete measured drawings of four courtyard houses, over a period of nine months, for an architectural thesis:

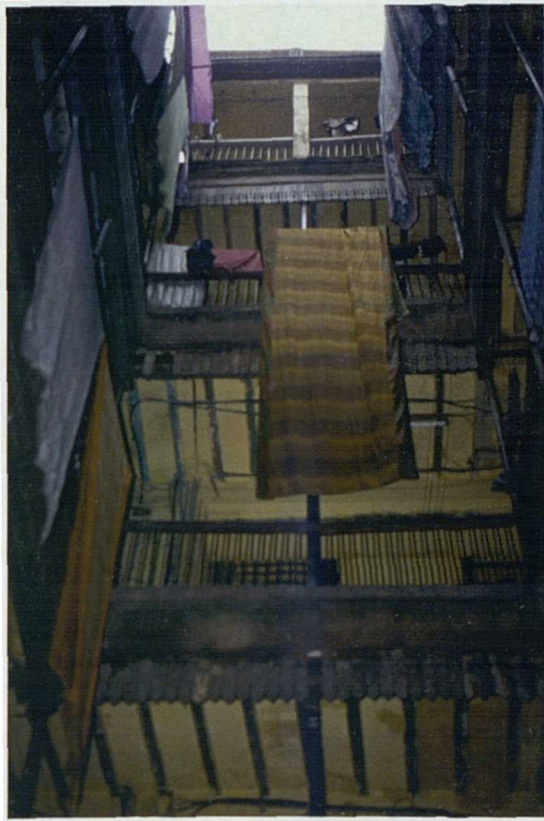
"I often had to take photographs furtively walking up and down a lane several times, waiting for people to leave. I was sometimes threatened. People



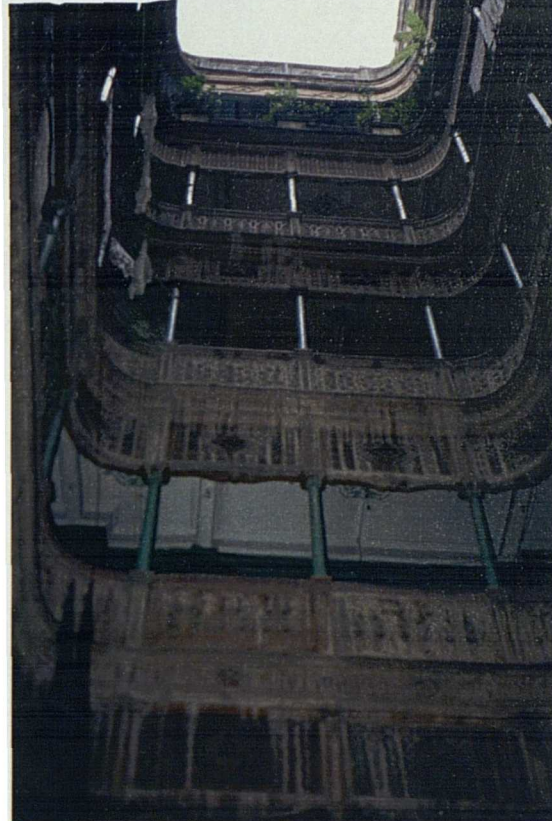
- 2-3 STOREY COURTYARD HOUSE
- 4-5 STOREY COURTYARD HOUSE
- 6-7 STOREY COURTYARD HOUSE



3.3 Locations of courtyard houses in Barabazaar. Surveyed August 2000



3.4 Residential courtyard building,
Barabazaar. Photographed August 2000



3.5 Residential courtyard building,
Barabazaar. Photographed August 2000

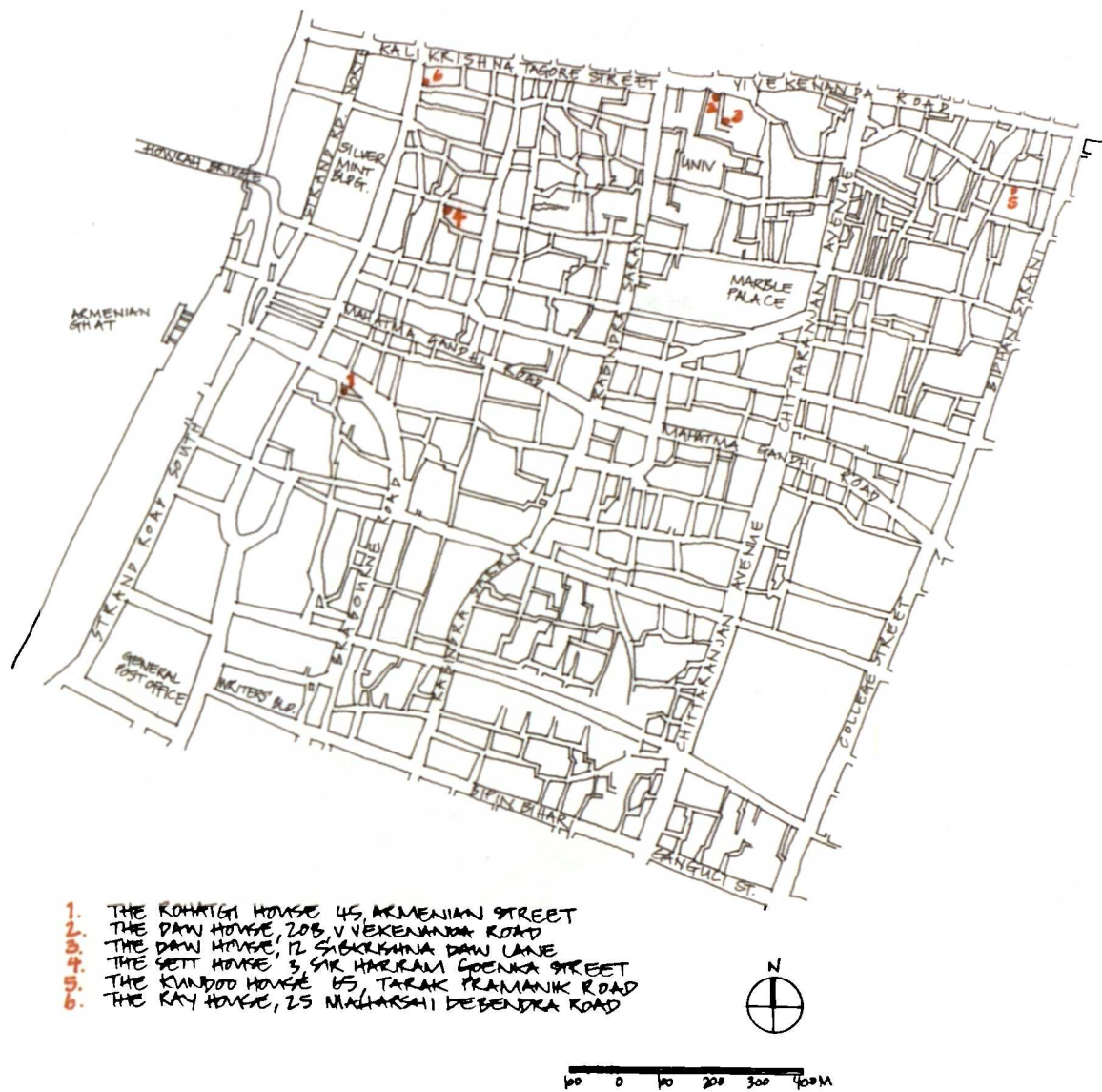
thought I was someone official, someone from the corporation about to throw them out . . . When I did the drawings I had to do it bit by bit because there were so many people involved you couldn't always get permission for the whole building - sometimes when you turned up people were out."

However, for me the inhabitants initially saw just another foreign tourist, with an interest in old buildings, which in this instance worked in my favour. Nevertheless, I always tried to keep as low a profile as possible.

The second type of courtyard house found in Barabazaar, and much rarer than the first, is a two to three storey building that was built for one extended family, some very opulent though decaying, often adapted as the family and/ or business expanded or contracted. Most of the courtyard houses I saw and with which this study is concerned, were of this second type, with only one owner, and after an introduction, gaining access was relatively straightforward. I surveyed six such courtyard houses in detail, owned by five families (figure 3.6). Despite their 'extraordinary' family histories and the houses that went with them, I remembered reflecting in Kolkata, in 2001, on how 'ordinary' a lot of these families seemed now. At the time I had just visited the family house of the Mallicks at 32, Darpanarayan Thakur Street, and met Mr. Sishir Mallick who lived there.⁷³ (His family is related to the Malliks who live at the Marble Palace.) Now, he owns a very small paint and DIY shop on the ground floor of his house, which had obviously seen better days. *Mr. Prabhat Rohatgi, drove everywhere in a small Meruti van. Mr. Ashim Sett, now ran a small firm of building contractors.*

I spoke to all families at varying length about their own histories. It seemed to be relatively easy to get hold of this information and in the culture of extended families, it was what people began by telling you. Whilst these histories are specific to these families, and connect quite strikingly to the larger historical picture, they were by their nature relatively general. At the beginning it was difficult to ask probing questions when I was getting to know someone, and admittedly 'feeling the way' myself. Also, I took photographs of the houses, and completed

⁷³ Sishir Mullick, conversation with the author, Kolkata, 29 July 2001



3.6 Plan of Barabazaar showing locations of courtyard houses surveyed

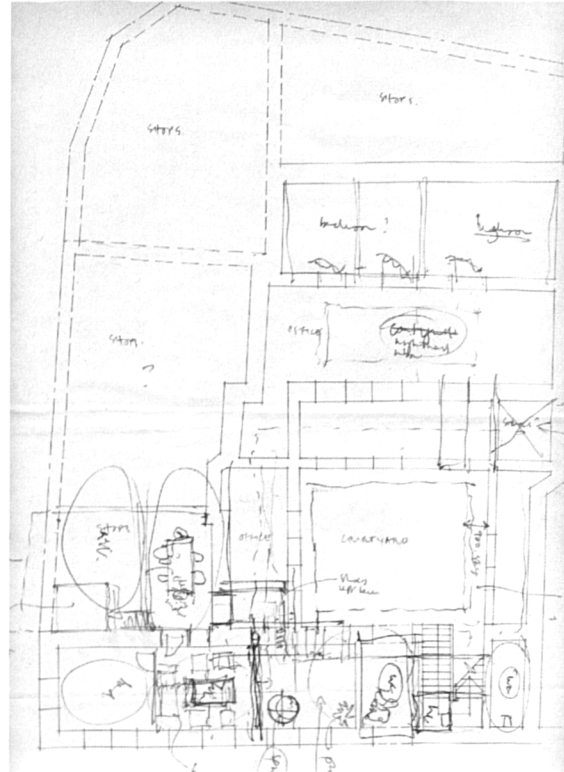
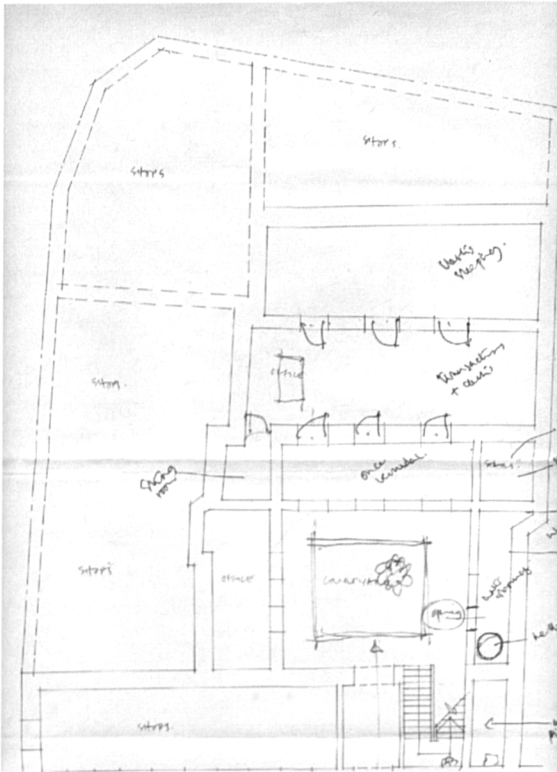
sketch surveys (figures 3.7 - 3.12). The process of measuring up surveys, and then drawing them up, often helped me reflect on the rationale behind how these buildings were organised socially. Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging the gaps and contradictions, and not wishing to make too many generalisations, it was possible to draw some connections and tentative conclusions from the diverse sources I have used. These histories come with the caveat that in most cases, and sometimes obviously so, I have largely spoken only to the male 'head of the family'.

In addition, there were many more owner-occupied courtyard houses in the neighbourhoods adjacent to Barabazaar, and I visited and photographed several of them, and met with owners who sadly for me had little to do with Barabazaar (figure 3.13, 3.14). Nevertheless, visiting these areas outside Barabazaar gave me new perspectives, both on the area itself, and on the courtyard houses of Barabazaar, which by comparison were generally much more compact and utilitarian. Generally, all of the courtyard houses in Barabazaar consist of offices for joint family businesses, and offices for rent, on the ground floor with family accommodation on one or two floors above.

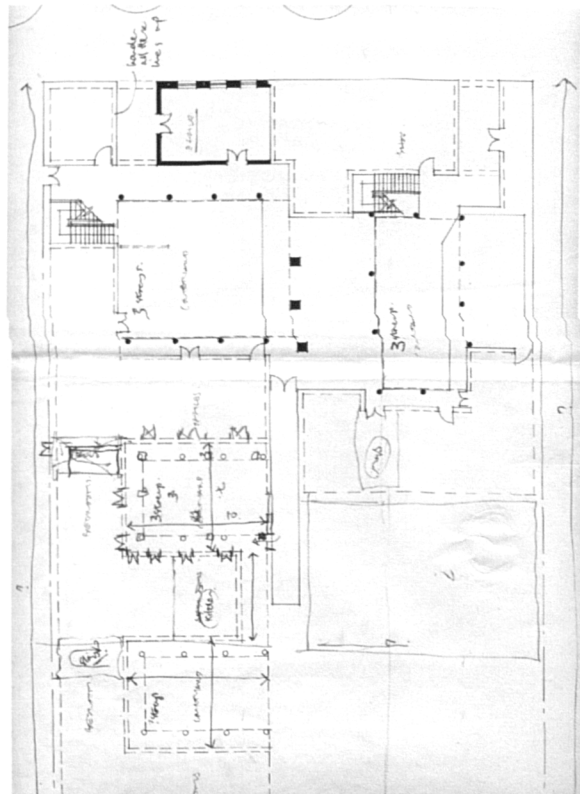
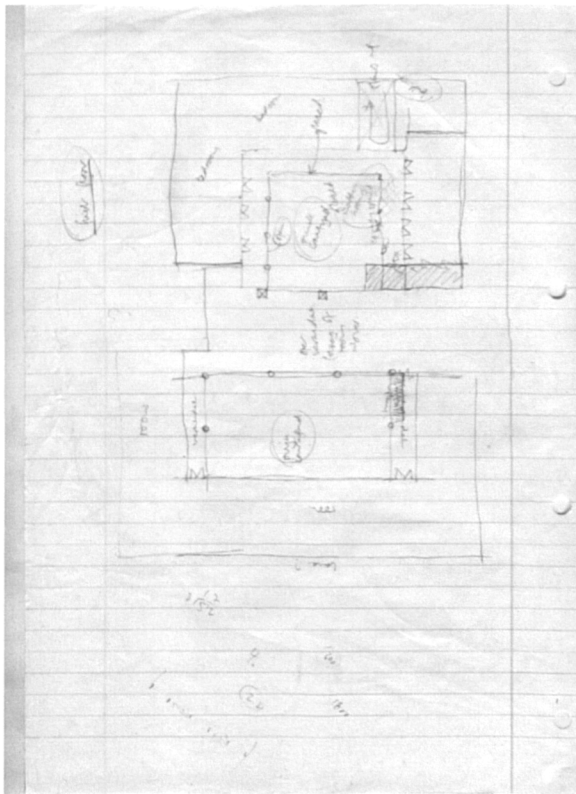
In addition, and as part of research for Chapter six, I completed taped semi-structured interviews with Mr. Samarendra Krishna Daw and Mr. Ashim Kumar Sett (Appendix 1). I also had a number of long un-taped discussions with Mr. Prabhat Rohatgi over several Sunday breakfasts, which I recorded in my research journal. The aims of these interviews were to; build up an accurate and detailed record of daily life in the houses; gather information about the history of the house and the family; and, explore cultural values and the changes that were occurring to them. For these interviews, I had a checklist of questions that I referred to (Appendix 2).

The Market Trader Case Studies

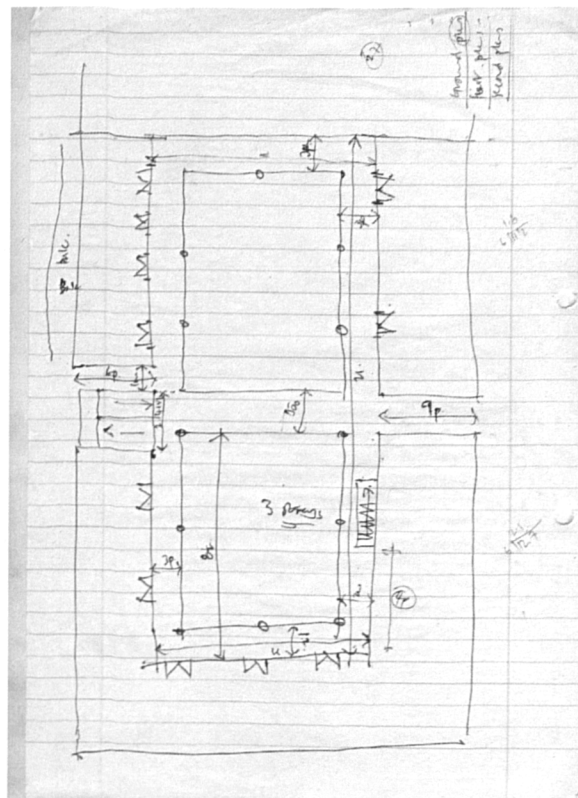
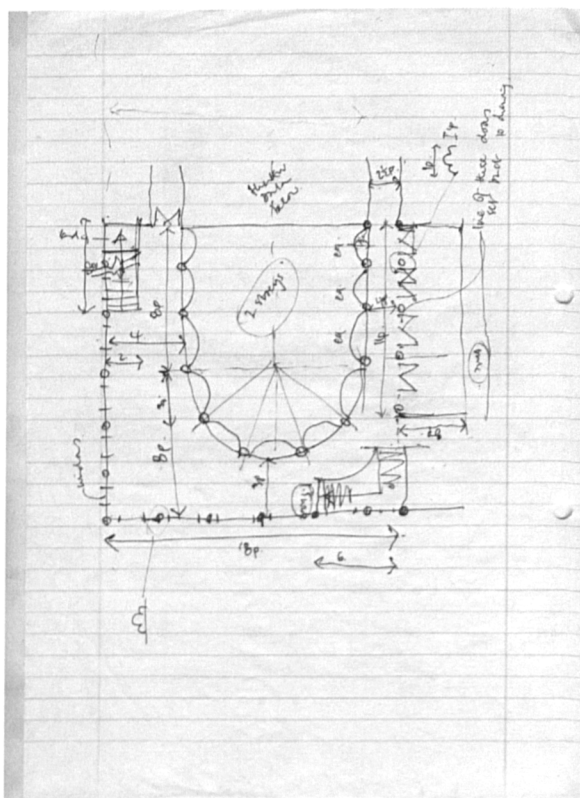
The bulk of the research for Chapter seven involved completing a number of taped semi-structured interviews with market traders who deal in paper and stationary in an area at the



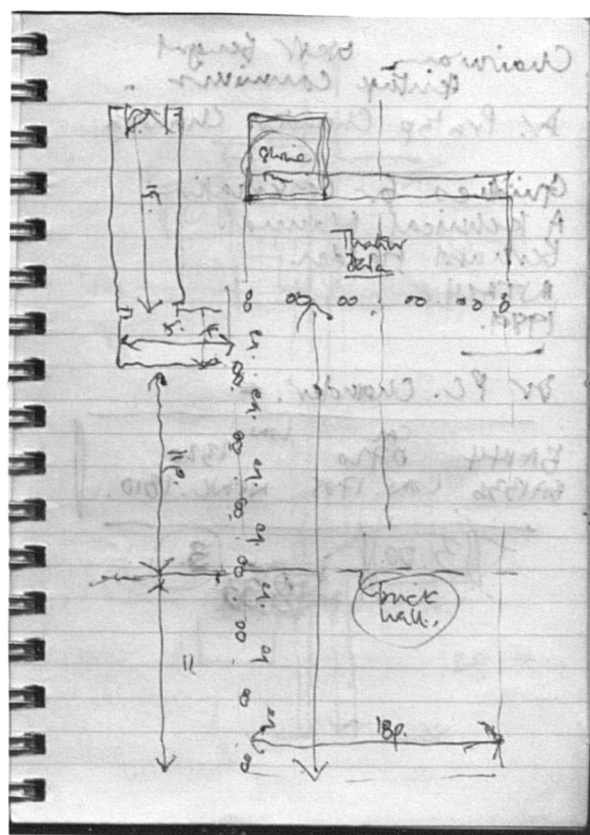
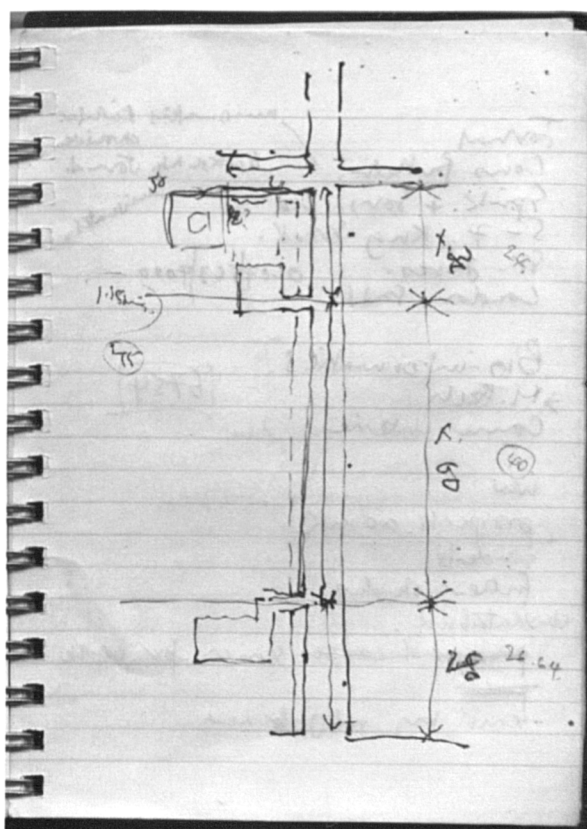
3.7 Initial survey plans of Rohatigi family house, 45, Armenian Street. Surveyed August 2000



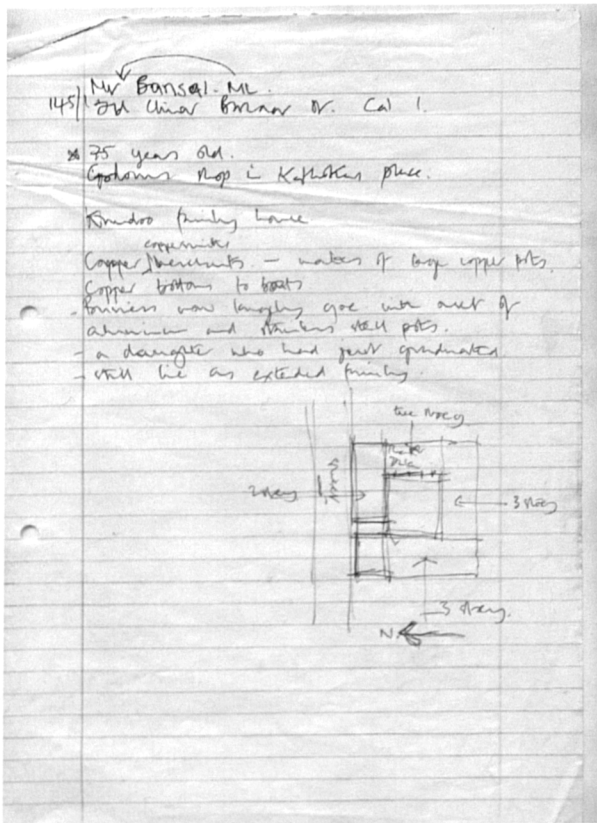
3.8 Initial survey plans of Daw family house, 20b Vivekenanda Road. Surveyed August 2000



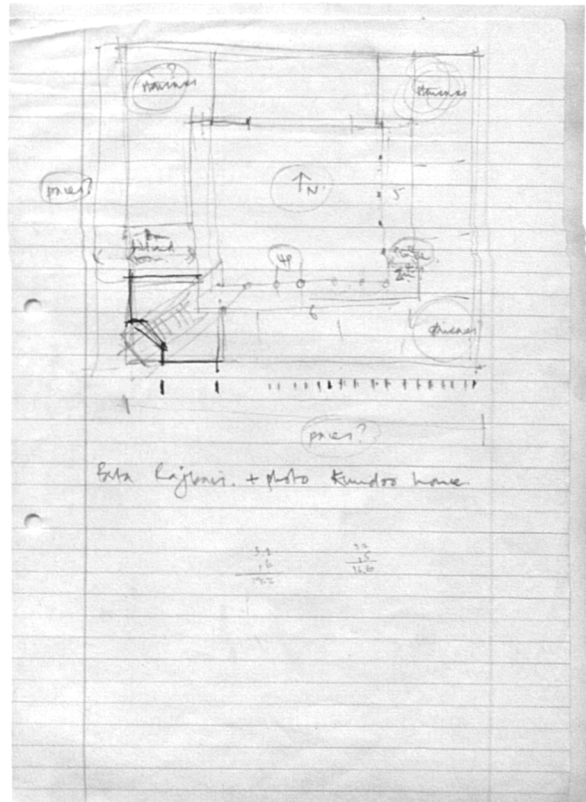
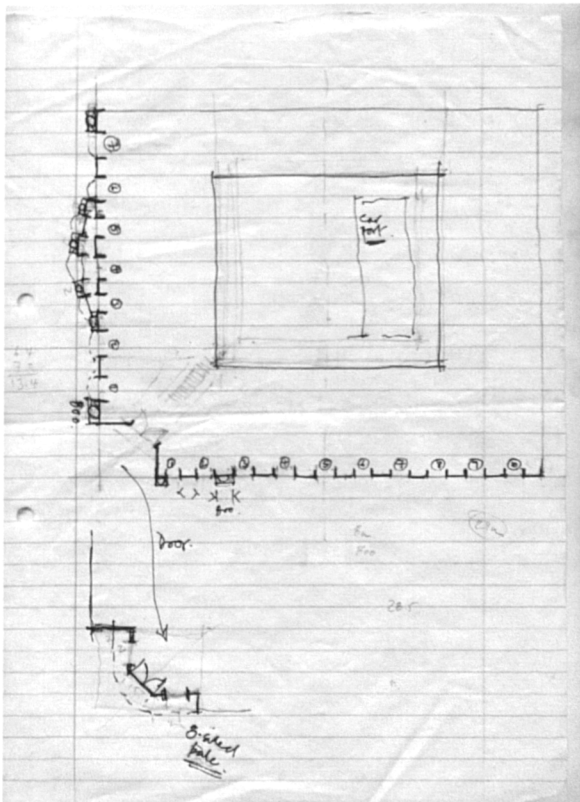
3.9 Initial survey plans of Daw family house, 12, Sibkrishna Daw Lane. Surveyed August 2000



3.10 Initial plans of Sett family house, 3, Sir Hariram Goenka Street. Surveyed August 2001



3.11 Initial plans and notes of Kundoo family house, 65, Tarak Pramanik Road. Surveyed Easter 2003



3.12 Initial plans of Ray Family house, 25 Maharshi Debendra Road. Surveyed Easter 2003



3.13 Mallick family house on Marharshi Debendra Road. 'Public' courtyard. Photographed Easter 2003



3.14 Bose family house at 24a, Raybagan Street. 'Public' courtyard. Photographed August 2000

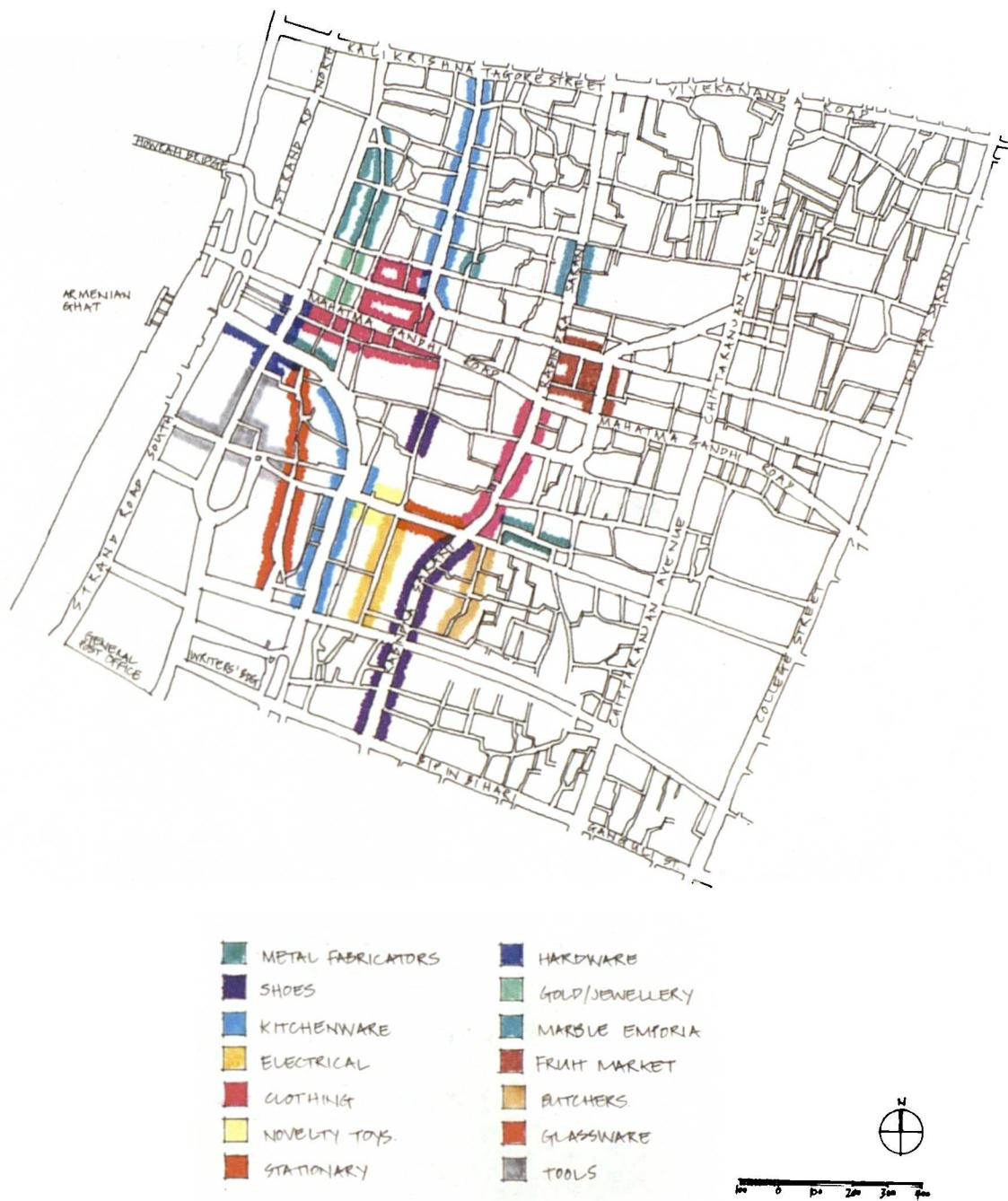
southern end of Barabazaar, called China Bazaar (Appendix 1). They all work on two adjacent streets, namely Old China Bazaar Street and Synagogue Street.

China Bazaar got its name from the sale of Chinese goods brought there by ships that traded between Kolkata and Canton. Prajnanda Banerjee states that, "in 1900, Chinabazaar had a flourishing business in paper, stationary, trunk, sugar, glass, leather-suitcase, [and] umbrella[s]."⁷⁴ Barabazaar and China Bazaar broadly are a mix of small retail and larger wholesale businesses. The pattern of trading clusters as seen in Barabazaar today is shown in figure 3.15.

Mostly the interviews were recorded at peoples' place of work during the day, amongst telephone calls, and customers coming and going. People were hard to track down in their busy lives, and to sit for a length of time without any distractions was impossible. Interviews were conducted in English and where translation services were required, these were provided informally by friends. Primarily, the aims of these interviews were to: build up an accurate and detailed record of daily life in China Bazaar; gather information about the history of the business and the family; and, explore cultural values, and the changes that were occurring to them. I had a checklist of interview questions that I referred to (Appendix 2).

Generally, the format of these interviews would start with a cup of tea and introductions, which might take from five minutes up to an hour. With people I had not met before, this would be a period when they would be sizing me up, asking me what I wanted to know and why I wanted to know it. Then there would be the formal taped interview which generally lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The interview itself took the form of a conversation rather than a simple question and answer session, although the questions were put straight from the checklist. After the interview, when the tape recorder was switched off and people began to realise what I wanted and to relax, there would often be more reflective information, which I tried to remember the gist of, and record in my journal afterwards.

⁷⁴ Banerjee, Prajnanda, 'Chapter IV Growth of Burabazaar,' in, *Calcutta and it's Hinterland, A Study in Economic History of India, 1833-1900*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 110-138, p. 111



3.15 Plan of Barabazaar trades. Surveyed August 2000

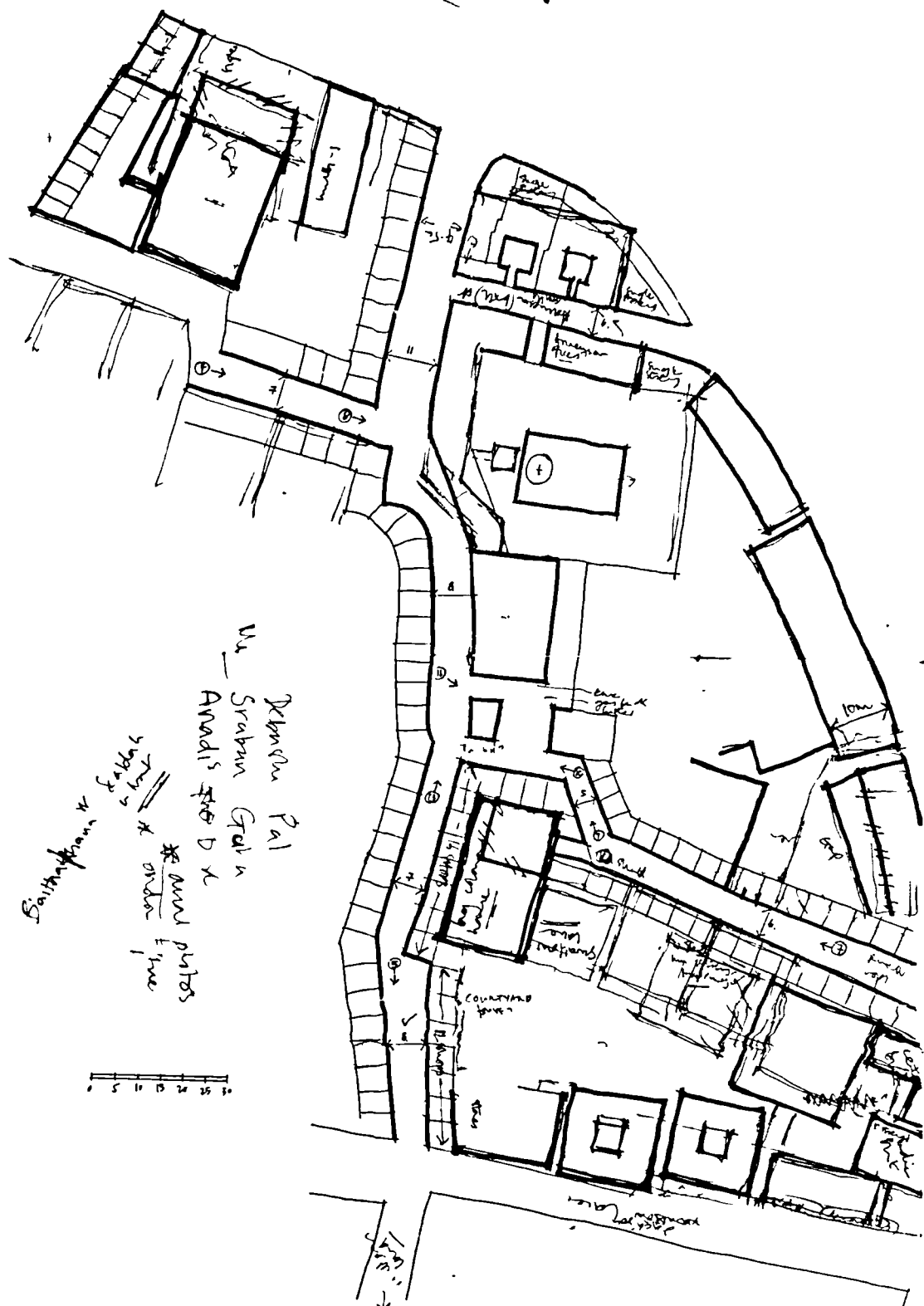
After a few of these interviews, I began to get similar answers, albeit with slight variations. This may have been a reflection of the fact that these traders had all known each other personally and professionally for many years, and naturally shared common opinions amongst themselves. The questions that were the most open-ended tended to give the most interesting and varied responses. Generally, the format of these interviews was very similar to that described for the courtyard house owners mentioned above, and like those interviews, questions acted as catalysts for post-interview discussions, and were stimulating for myself in thinking through emerging issues.

In addition, as part of research for Chapter five, I also surveyed the area of China Bazaar in some detail (figures 3.16). This was useful for similar reasons to those given for the house surveys described earlier. The process of measuring up surveys and then drawing them up often helped me reflect on the rationale behind how the market was organised socially.

Conclusions: The Need for 'Messy' Texts

Having considered some of the limitations and possibilities for hybridity theory (described in chapter two) and engaged with, and realised some of the difficulties of the fieldwork, I began to wonder how I could approach writing this thesis. How could participant observation work, when it was impossible for me to merge into the background of everyday life? How was it possible to comprehensively research a subject, when it was difficult to get hold of basic texts from local libraries? How could I gain a full picture of Barabazaar when the whole process of research was so unpredictable, ad-hoc, and seemingly open to chance? Indeed, how could I give a representative picture of Barabazaar within the confines of a single written text? Acknowledging these uncertainties, this process made me look for alternative ways of translating, or re-describing the story of Barabazaar. The model for this alternative story can best be summarised in the form of an ethnographic work known as a 'messy text.'

Some have argued that in order to reflect hybrid postmodern 'realities,' the forms that ethnographic texts take themselves must change. George E. Marcus writing in, 'What Comes



3.16 Initial survey plan of Old China Bazaar. Surveyed Easter 2003

(Just) After “Post”? The Case of Ethnography,’ defines the resistance found in such new experimental postmodern ethnographic work as being manifested in,

“a work’s messy, many-’sited’ness, its contingent openness as to the boundaries of the object of study (which emerge in the space of the work, whose connections by juxtaposition are themselves *the* argument), its concern with position, and its derivation/ negotiation of its analytic framework from indigenous discourse, form mappings within the sites in which the object of study is defined and among which it circulates.”⁷⁵

Although the authors of these works are often conscious themselves of being engaged in experimental work, as Marcus acknowledges, “there is much more to these texts, struggling with conventional form to provide new cognitive mappings, than special pleading, self-indulgence, avant-guardism, or a genius act.”⁷⁶ Marcus states that this new postmodern phenomena leads, “to the ‘messy text’ as manifestly the most complex and interesting form of experimentation with ethnographic writing now being produced.”⁷⁷

Norman Denzin writing in *Interpretive Ethnography*, provides a useful further working definition of these messy texts:

⁷⁵ Marcus, George E., ‘What Comes (Just) After “Post”? The Case of Ethnography,’ in, N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 1994, pp. 563-574, p. 567

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 567

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 566. For further explanation on messy texts refer to: E. M. Bruner, ‘Introduction: The Ethnographic Self and the Personal self,’ in, P. Benson (Ed.), *Anthropology and Literature*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1993, pp. 1-26, p. 1; P. T. Clough, *The End(s) of Ethnography*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1992, p. 10; R. L. M. Lee, and S. E. Ackerman, ‘Farewell to Ethnography? Global embourgeoisement and the disprivelizing of the narrative,’ *Critique of Anthropology*, 14, 1994, pp. 339-354, p. 350; G. E. Marcus, ‘What comes (just) after “Post”? The Case of Ethnography,’ in, N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, pp. 563-574, 1994.

George E. Marcus in, ‘What Comes (Just) After “Post”? The Case of Ethnography,’ cites the following additional texts: Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, Routledge, New York, 1989; Michael M. J. Fischer, and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1990; Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study of Terror and Healing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987; and, George E. Marcus, and Peter Hall, Dobkin, *Lives in Trust: the Fortunes of Dynastic Families in Late Twentieth Century America*, Westview, Boulder, Colorado, 1992.

"Messy texts are many sited, open ended, they refuse theoretical closure, and they do not indulge in abstract, analytic theorizing. They make the writer a part of the writing project. These texts, however, are not just subjective accounts of experience; they attempt to reflexively map multiple discourses that occur in a given social space. Hence they are always multivoiced, and no given interpretation is privileged. They reject the principles of the realist ethnographic narrative that makes claims to textual autonomy and to offering authoritative accounts of the processes being examined."⁷⁸

Messy texts move back and forth between description, interpretation, and voice. These texts attempt to blur the dividing line between the observer and the observed, but still make the writer's experiences central to the topic at hand. The messy text produces local, situated knowledge about the practices of a given group and its culture. In common with other ethnographic writing forms, there is a stress on historical contingencies and social processes that shape and play on the situations and persons under study. The messy text re-creates a social world as a site, at which identities and local cultures are negotiated, and given meaning. The writer-as-scribe for the other also becomes a cultural critic: a person who voices interpretations about the events recorded and observed.

In addition to the postmodern reality, Marcus identifies three rationales for constructing such texts. Firstly, they arise simply as an expression of the compression of space and time that marks the contemporary everyday life of peoples and culture globally. As Marcus states, "in what was formerly incommensurable is brought into relationship or at least contact; the global, or aspects of global process, is now encompassed by the local, and purely local meanings are no longer a sufficient object of study."⁷⁹

Secondly, they wrestle with the loss of a credible holism, so important in previous ethnographic writing. However, significantly in messy texts there is a sense of a whole without evoking totality, that emerges from the research process itself. As Marcus describes it, "the

⁷⁸ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. xvii

⁷⁹ Marcus, 'What Comes (Just) After "Post"?', p. 567

territory that defines the object of study is mapped by the ethnographer who is within its landscape, moving and acting within it, rather than drawn from a transcendent, detached point.”⁸⁰

Thirdly, messy texts are messy because they insist on an open-endedness, an incompleteness, and an uncertainty about how to draw an analysis to a close. As Marcus asserts, “such open-endedness often marks a concern with an ethics of dialogue and partial knowledge that a work is incomplete without critical, and differently positioned, responses to it by its (one hopes) varied readers.”⁸¹

For Marcus, “the important questions to pose about messy texts concern how they end (openly, with utopian hope, pragmatic resolution, and so on), what space they lay out, and how the conceptual apparatus (and the *naming* of its object) emerges as a function of the hesitation to establish conceptual or analytic authority by fiat.”⁸² However Marcus is quick to acknowledge that rather than seeing such texts as models for a new genre of critical work, he finds them interesting, “as *symptoms* of struggle within given formats and practices of analytic writing to produce unexpected connections and thus new descriptions of old realities.”⁸³

As Marcus asserts, some of this thinking on reflexivity, and on postmodernity in general, has led to fears, “of transgression, of excessive scepticism, and of a paralysing relativism - of a crossing of limits beyond which “anything goes” (the form in which one often hears such a fear voiced).”⁸⁴ Denzin warns that, “the multiple risks include narcissistic texts, texts preoccupied with their own reflexivity, good and bad poetry, politically correct attitudes, too much concern for language, and utopian impulses predicated on the belief that the recovery of the previously repressed self can produce liberation and freedom.”⁸⁵ Combined, these risks can produce a neglect of ethnography’s central purpose: to produce meaningful, critical discourse about the many worlds we all inhabit. Despite such risks, Denzin believes that,

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 568

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 573

⁸⁵ Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, p. 226

"there is a pressing need to invent a reflexive form of writing that turns ethnography and experimental literary texts back 'onto each other' so that the liabilities of each form are somehow transcended."⁸⁶ This is the fundamental aim of the messy text, like the 'intentional' hybrid, to be transgressive.

Messy texts are neither models to follow nor the much-awaited products of a new paradigm, nor empty conformity with radicalising fashion. Rather they represent the substantive, deep effects of postmodern debates on personal styles of thought and work in established disciplines. For Marcus, they are, "the testing ground - always a mix of strong engagement by authors with 'what goes on' among particular subjects of study and of an equally strong reflexive engagement with their own self-making as scholars - in which qualitative social science is being remade in the absence of authoritative models, paradigms, or methods."⁸⁷ The concerns of such texts, far from being predictable and narrow, are as broad and diverse as the concerns that have shaped traditions of qualitative social science itself. Indeed, it could be argued that Bhabha's book, *Location of Culture*, is a 'messy' text. It is with this 'messy text' in mind that I approached writing the main empirical chapters, that now follow.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 227

⁸⁷ Marcus, 'What Comes (Just) After "Post"?', p. 573

CHAPTER 4

HYBRID PASTS: COLONIAL SPACE, HEALTH, AND MODERNITY IN BARABAZAAR

“But to form a correct idea of a purely *Oriental bazaar*, it is necessary to visit the ‘Burra Bazaar,’ or as it is commonly called by Europeans (though wherefore we know not), the thieves’ bazaar. A great portion of this emporium is covered in, and is two stories high. Its streets or rather lanes, are so thronged as to be impervious except to pedestrians, and even they can progress by slowly, by dint of jostling and elbowing. Here are squeezed together all castes and denominations - Musselman and Hindu; Bengalee and Rajput; Mughls and Burmese; Chinese, Malays, Parsees, Negroes, and every shade of Lascar. The list may be closed by a sprinkling of beggars, exhibiting the most loathsome case of deformity and disease, and not a few specimens of those disgusting objects the Fakirs, their long matted hair plastered with ochre and twisted like a coil of snakes round their heads, and their naked bodies smeared with a filthy composition.”

John Newcombe, ‘Local Sketches,’ quoted in, Carey, W. H., *The good Old Days of John Company, being Curious Reminiscences Illustrating Names and Customs of the East India Company 1600-1858*, R. Cambrey and Co., Calcutta, 1906-1907, p. 111, 112

Chapter Summary

In the first part of this thesis, I considered the development and evolution of hybridity theory and my approach to fieldwork undertaken in Barabazaar. In the second part of this thesis, I deal with the empirical work. This chapter investigates colonial attitudes to disease, in Barabazaar. I begin by outlining the 'civilising mission' of British colonialism, and its close links to European modernity, before contrasting these with Bengali views of such civilisation, from which a hybrid sense of modernity emerges. Debates around health and hygiene were part of the British civilising mission, and through the health and planning reports produced by the British authorities, I explore the construction of a colonial 'urban history of Kolkata', and the formation of a mixed and inter-twined narrative of health and modernity. Concluding, I highlight some of the hybrid and competing histories, which framed competing debates about health and hygiene in Bengali Kolkata for most of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.

Introduction: Competing Visions of Modernity

In chapter one, I outlined the construction of the new Fort William that started in 1757, and which marked the process of gradual withdrawal of the Europeans from the Indian Barabazaar-Sutanuti area. As well as military expediency, what this process hints at is the civilising mission of British colonialism, which started to institute a vision of civil society in Bengal and India, highlighted in the debate over education. At one extreme, Thomas B. Macaulay's now infamous, 'Minute on education,' of 1835, deliberated over whether the paltry funds for education earmarked in the 1813 charter for the East India Company, should be spent on learning Western or Indian languages.¹ Macaulay disparaged the opinion of people like Sir William Jones (founder of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata) who believed that provision for schooling, "should be used to preserve and transmit Indian ancient knowledge."² Instead, Macaulay arrogantly claimed that the Company should use education, "to form a class who

¹ Macaulay, Thomas B., 'Minute on Education,' quoted in, Stein, Burton, *A History of India*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 1998, p. 265, 266

² Stein, Burton, *A History of India*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 1998, p. 265

may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”³ Even in more moderate hands, as Sudipta Kaviraj has mentioned, the educational policy of British colonialism, “engaged in a powerful effort to persuade elite Indians of the truth of a celebratory narrative of European modernity, of the birth and triumph of reason, which was, at least theoretically considered universally accessible if not implicit in humankind.”⁴ Of course, when Bengalis sought to act out these principles, and enact a story of their own enlightenment, the British authorities obstructed that process with the racist argument of the intellectual and cultural immaturity of Indians (an attitude which is explained in more detail in chapter one).

By way of contrast, to such British colonial ideas of ‘civilisation,’ it is worth briefly considering the Bengali author, Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay’s text *Kalikata Kamalalaya* (1823).⁵ This text is an interesting instance of the Indian dharmic code being used to produce and organise an articulation of the relationship between domestic and civil-political life which was quite antithetical to that produced under the sign of European ‘civilisation’. *Kalikata Kamalalaya* is written in the form of a dialogue between an ‘urban dweller’, a Brahmin who lived and worked in Kolkata, and a ‘stranger’, a newcomer from the country, who handled the city with a certain degree of trepidation, but who is eager to find out about its ways. *Kalikata Kamalalaya* displays an inherent anxiety over the changes brought about by social mobility in Kolkata, in particular the role that ‘new’ money could play in undermining the ‘proper’ model of social order and the place of the Brahmins in it. Chakrabarty explains how religious ceremonies were not being observed in the proper spirit, “the celebration of Durga Puja (worshipping of Goddess Durga) in Calcutta, . . . , had already acquired a bad name among many who called it, mockingly, ‘chandelier *puja*’, festival of *baijis* [dancing girls]’, ‘occasion for the worship of one’s wife’s jewellery and sarees’, etc.”⁶

³ *ibid.*, p. 266

⁴ Kaviraj, Sudipta, ‘Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about space in Calcutta,’ *Public Culture*, vol. 10, part 1, 1997, pp. 83-113, p. 92

⁵ For a more detailed analysis, refer to: Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity: Public Debates in British Bengal,’ *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 36, Autumn 1993, pp. 1-34

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 16, 17

Bhabanicharan's aim was to prevent the realm of worldly interests, *vishaykarma*, which is where British rule was situated, from polluting the purer domains of *daivakarma* and *pitrikarma*. Of particular interest in this regard, is a framework for everyday living that Bhabanicharan developed in the face of demands of a modern colonial civil society. Chakrabarty provides additional clarification:

"The worldly [*vishay*] Brahmins of Calcutta conducted their *vishaykarma* under the English but took special care to protect the dominance and prestige of the Brahmins in the eyes of their own people. They washed themselves every evening on returning home from work and thus cleansed themselves of the bad effects [*dosha*] born of the [day-long] contact with the *mlechha* [untouchable' i.e. the English]. They would then complete their *sandhya* [evening prayer] and other [rituals of] *puja* [worship], and eat in the eighth part of the day [about midnight] . . . Those who found this routine too difficult made a habit of completing their evening prayer, *homa* and other *pujas* in the morning before they left for office. Further they would offer Brahmins money and other objects [*naivedya*: objects offered to sacred powers] and that itself cancelled out all their *dosha*."⁷

Bhabanicharan was speaking primarily to and about the Bengali middle-class, the social group that was most strongly attracted to the British colonial modern state. It was this group that had the duty of servicing colonial society, developing in Bakhtinian terms, an 'organic' hybrid view of everyday life. Modernity first arose in Europe, and then spread, by way of European imperial expansion to countries like India. At this point, what I wish to highlight are the differing and often opposed 'signs' under which a Bengali modernity was configured. Implicated in this were the structures and relationships of power that produced the familiar narratives of the British colonial state - oppressions and tensions produced by and productive of the categories of class, gender, nation, state, and ethnicity. Since the relationship was one

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 18, 19

that denied the colonised the status of citizen, the Bengali middle-class response to the western idea of modernity could only ever be one of only partial emulation. Thus, Bengalis had an ambivalent relationship with the modern colonial state and the narrative of European modernity that it represented, producing their own configuration of the modern. According to Bhabha, this is typical of, “the place of [intentional] hybridity,” which involves negotiation with, “antagonistic or contradictory elements.”⁸ It is this sense of a hybrid modernity, and as I shall demonstrate an inter-twined narrative of health, that I wish to develop in this chapter.

Colonial Space

As I have already outlined in chapter one, perpetuating the ideal of separate and contained colonial space, controlled by a colonial government, relied on establishing and maintaining an essential difference between the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised.’ One way these so-called essential differences were maintained was through debates surrounding health and hygiene, which were a significant part of the British civilising mission.⁹ In 1817, the same year from which Bhabha relates his story of Anund Messeh discovering the miraculous effects of the Bible outside Delhi (described in chapter two), the first major outbreak of cholera occurred, in Northern India. Swati Chattopadhyay argues, no other disease captured the horrified imaginations of Europeans more than cholera: “the quickness with which it struck, the frightful symptoms, the lack of therapeutics, and the absence of a predictable pattern made it the most feared disease and the most salient among administrative concerns.”¹⁰ The disease was considered endemic to Lower Bengal. Successive British Governments in Kolkata became increasingly concerned with the links between the health of its inhabitants and the cleanliness of the city. This was particularly the case in the northern parts of the city, where the indigenous population lived, and where it was believed many of the diseases originated. Medically speaking, places where Indians collected in big numbers were seen as threats to

⁸ Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 25

⁹ Swati Chattopadhyay, in her PhD thesis, *Depicting Calcutta*, studies how these differences were maintained through paintings and literature in Kolkata. For an overview of how health narratives were reinforced in nineteenth century India, refer to: David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993

¹⁰ Chattopadhyay, Swati, *Depicting Calcutta*, PhD in Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1997, p. 77, 88

European health. A major theme of public health measures in colonial India was to control the spread of epidemics from fairs, pilgrimage centres, and bazaars.¹¹

Lottery and Fever Hospital Committees

As a result of such concerns two committees that ran consecutively were established to investigate these links, and the first, set up in 1803 became known as the Lottery Committee, from its chief means of obtaining funds. The Lottery committee was instigated by Richard Wellesley, the first Governor-General of India (1798-1805). His Minutes of 16 June 1803, according to Monidip Chatterjee, put forward the, "British Government's first genuine concern for the ordered development of Calcutta," and set, "in motion the actual course of planning and development over the major part of the nineteenth century."¹² As the Minutes directed, a Town Improvement Committee was set up consisting of thirty members, and was issued with instructions to: survey the town, and suggest improvements to the public drains and water courses; provide for the regulation of public markets, slaughter houses and places of burial; fix permanent rules for the construction and distribution of houses and public buildings; put forward proposals for the improvement of roads and streets; and to estimate what the cost of these improvements would be.

Wellesley's motives were unambiguous for, "the Capital of the British Empire in India, and the seat of the supreme authority."¹³ In the introduction to his Minutes he stated that, "it has now become absolutely necessary to provide permanent means of promoting the health, the comfort, and the convenience of the numerous inhabitants of this great town."¹⁴ Of course, Wellesley meant the European inhabitants of Kolkata, and he criticised the, "quarters of the town, occupied by the native inhabitants," whose, "houses have been built without order or regularity, and the streets and lanes have been formed without attention to the health,

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of this, refer to, D. Arnold, 'Cholera and Colonialism in British India,' *Past and Present*, 113 (November 1986), pp. 118-151

¹² Chatterjee, Monidip, 'Town Planning in Calcutta: Past, Present and Future,' in *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 133-147, p. 135

¹³ Martin, Montgomery, *The Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During his Administration in India*, vol. IV, W. H. Allen and Co., London, 1837, p. 672

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 672

convenience, or safety of the inhabitants.”¹⁵ Wellesley’s motives were unashamedly aligned with social control. He explained that, “every improvement which shall introduce a greater degree of order, symmetry, and magnificence in the streets, roads, ghauts, and wharfs, public edifices, and private habitations, will tend . . . to secure and promote every object of a just and salutary system of police.”¹⁶

According to Monidip Chatterjee, over the 30 years that the Lottery Committee existed, “there came into being the long stretch of Wood Street, Wellesley Street (Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road), Wellington Street (Nirmal Chandra Street), College Street and Cornwallis Street (Bidhan Sarani).”¹⁷ The major public activity centres and places of public interest were erected along this north-south axis.¹⁸ This axial route was planned to relieve the traditional north-south route along Chitpur Road, the old pilgrim’s path to Kalighat Temple in the south. Chatterjee states that, “while Chitpur Road was flanked by Temples and rich men’s palaces and mansions, the new axis was chiefly adorned with planned public places embodying the new ethos of the city during the nineteenth century ‘Renaissance’ in Calcutta and Bengal.”¹⁹ These roads skirted the ‘black’ town and were characteristically colonial, constructed as straight broad tree-lined avenues (figures 4.1 - 4.4).

The Lottery Committee was replaced in 1836 by the Fever Hospital Committee, set up at the request of Indian and British residents for a comprehensive understanding of Kolkata’s sanitary needs and in particular to evaluate the sanitary condition of the indigenous town. According to Chatterjee, “its appointment was primarily due to the enlightened zeal and dedication of Sir James Ranald Martin, Surgeon of the native Hospital in Dharmatala,” and was supported at Government level by Lord Auckland.²⁰ Martin’s *Notes on the Medical*

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 673

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Chatterjee, ‘Town Planning in Calcutta,’ p. 137

¹⁸ Many of them still exist: Bethune College, the Scottish Church College, a public swimming pool and club at Hedua (Azad Hind Bag), the Brahmo Samaj Mandir, the Hatibagan market, the Star and other theatres, the College Street market, Presidency college, Hare School, Sanskrit College, Hindu School, Calcutta University, the University Institute, the Calcutta Medical College, the Muslim Institute, and the Survey of India Office (earlier the Calcutta Meteorological Office). (Source: Chatterjee, ‘Town Planning in Calcutta,’ p.137)

¹⁹ Chatterjee, ‘Town Planning in Calcutta,’ p. 137

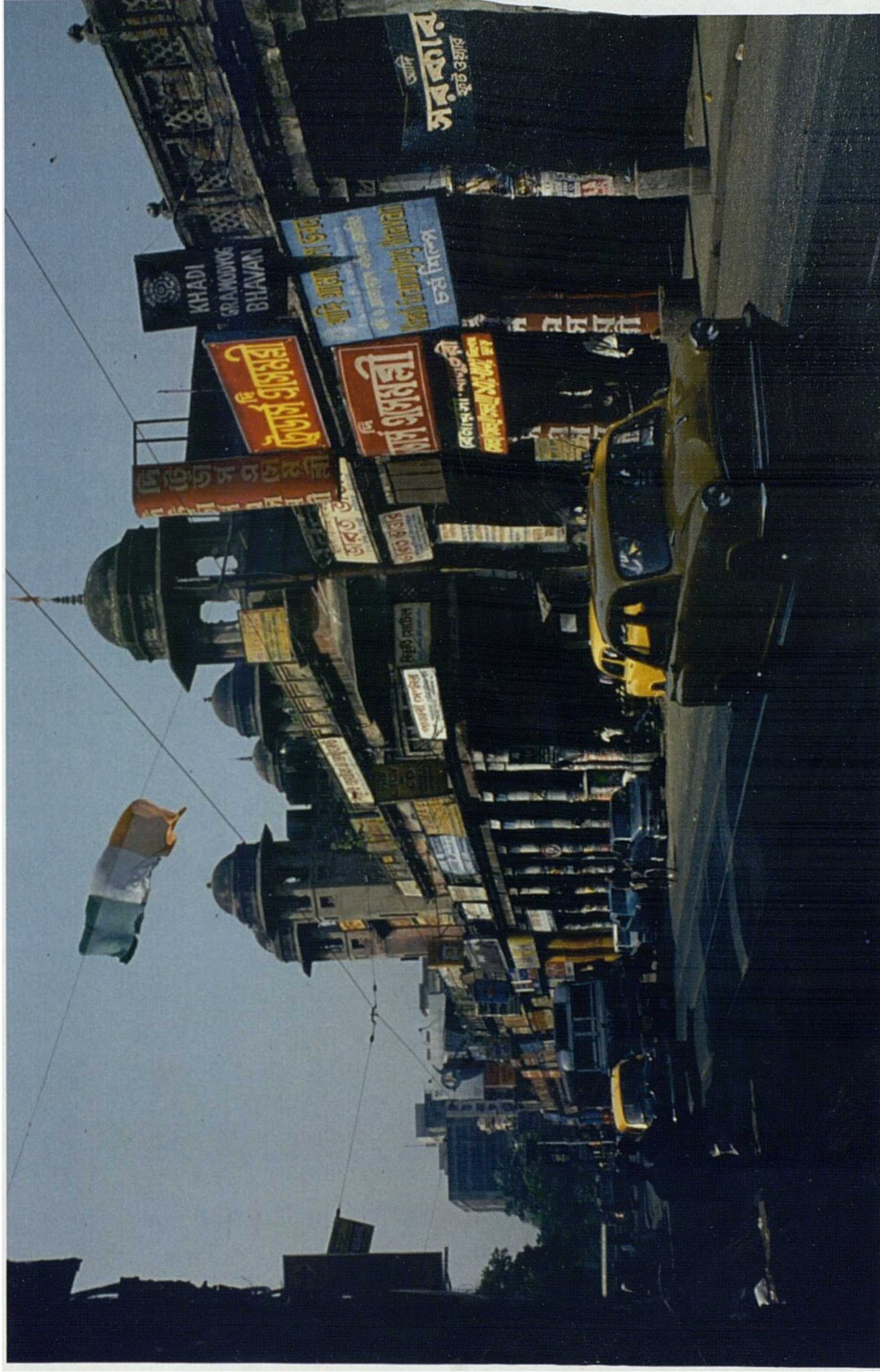
²⁰ *ibid.*



4.1. Wood Street. Photographed Easter 2003



4.2 Wellesley Street (Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road) Photographed Easter 2003



4.3. College Street. Photographed Easter 2003



4.4. Chitpur Road (Rabindra Sarani) Photographed Easter 1999

Topography of Calcutta (1834), recommended the establishment of a Fever Hospital and proper sanitation for the town. Arguably, *The Medical Topography of Calcutta*, and *The Fever Hospital Report* set the agenda of European ideas and morals, and possible solutions to problems in the indigenous town, that were to be in regular circulation throughout the rest of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Martin's description of the 'native' town in *The Medical Topography of Calcutta*, covered dwellings, streets, drains, sewers, and tanks. It begins in tones of colonial superiority, by acknowledging the good fortune of the Europeans, who, "had the black town to windward during the S. W. monsoon . . . here at least, accident has favoured us."²¹ At this time, it was widely believed that the monsoon winds carried germs from the northern part of town to the southern part. Martin admitted that in the 'native' town, "it is less difficult to find fault, than to remedy the evil complained of."²² Echoing Wellesley's message of social control, he thought that in, "an affair so important to the public health, *something* may be done and at last ought to be tried, if only in the way of municipal or police regulation."²³

He described in greater detail the particular problems of Barabazaar and their possible solution:

"In the event of a contagious disease . . . the dense state of the Burra Bazaar and surrounding parts, the want of water courses, and means of facility for removing accumulations of filth, &c. would stand as insuperable bars to the best devised regulations of medical police. All masses of buildings should be opened out, old walls and decayed houses removed; for even under ordinary circumstances these are fertile sources of fever."²⁴

²¹ Martin, James Ranald, *Notes on the Medical Topography of Calcutta*, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1837, p. 18

²² *ibid.*, p. 19

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

Martin defined the general character of the houses of the wealthier classes of Barabazaar as, "brick-built, from two to three stories high, closely constructed and divided only by dirty, narrow and unpaved streets; the roofs are flat and terraced."²⁵ However, he remarked later that, "the mass of the labouring classes live in huts, the walls of which are of mud, or of matted reed or bamboo, roofed with straw or tiles, according to the means of the occupant; these would not be so bad, but that they are uniformly placed on the bare ground, or on damp mud, but little raised, which continually emits injurious exhalations."²⁶ For Martin, the need for street widening was self-evident, in, "the native portion of the town . . . with its narrow lanes, and 'ranked compound of villainous smells that ever offended nostril.'" Street widening would, "effect the two greatest improvements of all as respects the salubrity of [the] city, free exposure to the sun, to rarify and elevate the vapours, and to the winds to dilute and dissipate them." According to Martin, where new streets were formed, "they should be as much as possible in the direction of prevailing winds."²⁷

Again in tones of moral superiority, Martin proclaimed, "the natives have yet to learn, in public and private sense, that the 'sweet sensations connected with cleanly habits, and pure air, are some of the most precious gifts of civilization . . .'" For Martin there was a direct link between the cleanliness of the native town and with moral cleanliness: "the common saying that 'cleanliness is next to godliness,' is founded on reason, in as much as it is conducive to moral purity as well as health and pleasure."²⁸

The *Fever Hospital Committee Report* was published in 1839 and dealt with town planning in general, advocated the construction of more thoroughfares, and the excavation of large tanks or reservoirs, to augment the water supply. While it argued for a great central hospital and additional dispensaries, it also called in engineers to discuss various schemes for its proper drainage, which it identified as the major source of its diseases. Of course, the drains were generally supposed to be in their most offensive state in the Indian part of the town. Mr. John Phipps in his evidence to the committee called these drains, "sinks of filth and consequent

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 19, 20

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 21

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 23

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 24

malaria,” and claimed that many were, “merely irregular furrows in the soil without any brickwork.”²⁹ The evidence of Dr W. Graham described the drains as, “hot beds of disease,” and claimed that, “the entire native town, must be considered unhealthy from inefficient or rather no drainage, tainted tanks, and an external mass of animal and vegetable matter in a state of decomposition surrounding them.”³⁰ When he was asked if there were any healthy situations in the native town his answer was equally as pessimistic: “in all parts of the native town and suburbs, [I have] never found amidst the wilderness the green spot in which the philanthropist could repose and exclaim “*hic sanitas*.”³¹ His solution was simple, “widen and water the roads, and Calcutta will be as healthy as any city in the world.”³² (figure 4.5)

Nineteenth Century Health Reports

The immediate outcome of the *Fever Hospital Committee Report* was the formation, under Act XVI (1847), of a Board of seven Commissioners, of whom four were to be elected representatives of the rate-payers. This was the earliest attempt at local self-government in Kolkata.³³ It also marked the start in 1848, of the formal appointment of health officers, and the production of health reports and maps for Kolkata. Through these health officers, disease came increasingly under the scrutiny of the British authorities, and they became the instrument through which the colonial state perpetuated its ideal of colonial space on the ground. Chattopadhyay claims that, “cholera mortality became the standard for measuring the healthiness of Calcutta, and prominently shaped the image of the city.”³⁴ The Indian part of town, in particular the *bustee* or ‘native village’, was considered its breeding ground. There is little doubt they harboured disease, and they had a higher mortality rate than their better-off neighbours. Health officers made cholera in *bustees* the central theme of sanitation.

²⁹ *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Right Honourable the Governor of Bengal for the Establishment of a Fever Hospital, and for Inquiring into Local Management and Taxation in Calcutta*, Bishops College Press, Calcutta, 1839, p. 20

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 25

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ Subsequent experiments with local self-government continued through various Acts of 1852, 1854, 1856, 1863, 1870, 1876, 1888 and 1899 (source: Chatterjee, ‘Town Planning in Calcutta,’ p.138)

³⁴ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 78, 79



4.5. Plan showing rapid development of the city following 'improvements' by the Lottery and Fever hospital Committees. Captain R. Smyth
Plan of Calcutta, Showing the Latest Improvements as Existing in 1854
 By Permission of the British Library, X/1225

Writing in 1872, C. Fabre-Tonnerre, Health Officer for the Calcutta Municipality, provided a description designed to impress on the public the dangers to be found in these parts of town:

"A *bustee* or native village generally consists of a mass of huts constructed without any plan or arrangement, without roads, without drains, ill-ventilated and never cleaned. Most of these villages are the abodes of misery, vice, and filth, and the nurseries of sickness and disease. In these *bustees* are found green and slimy stagnant ponds, full of putrid vegetable and animal matter in a state of decomposition and whose bubbling surfaces exhale, under a tropical sun, noxious gases, poisoning the atmosphere and spreading around disease and death. These ponds supply the natives with water for domestic purposes and are very often the receptacles of filth. The arteries which feed these tanks are the drains that ramify over the village and carry out the sewerage into them. Their position is marked by a development of rank vegetation. The entrances to these *bustees* are many, but not easily discoverable, whilst the paths are so narrow and tortuous that it is difficult for a stranger to find his way through them. The huts are huddled together in masses and pushed to the very edge of the ponds, their projecting eaves often meeting together, whilst the intervening spaces, impervious to the rays of the sun, are converted into necessaries and used by both sexes in common. In these huts often live entire families, the members of which occupy the single apartment of which it is not infrequently composed, and in which they cook, eat, and sleep together; the wet and spongy floor, with a mat spread on it serving as a bed for the whole."³⁵

Pandering to the fear and paranoia of the colonial reader, he explained the dangers of leaving these portions of the city unimproved: "it is a well known fact that many of the epidemics that have visited Calcutta have first made their appearance in the northern division of the town."³⁶ The solution for Tonnerre was a systematic improvement of these *bustees*, beginning

³⁵ *Administration Report of the Calcutta Municipality, 1872*, p.5

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6

with, "the preparation of correct plans of each *bustee* showing its exact boundary, the situation of the tanks or ponds, and distinguishing the high from the low lands."³⁷ The next thing to be done was to clear the land, if necessary, of all the huts: "the *jungle* should be cut down, the ponds and drains and marshy lands filled up, and the ground properly levelled so as to prevent any possibility of the water stagnating in any place."³⁸ Then, "the land being prepared, a proper tank should be selected amongst those existing for the supply of water for domestic purposes, as well as one or two sites for public latrines."³⁹ Finally, "the principal roads should then be marked and the land divided into building blocks, after which it would be comparatively easy to define the position of the bye-lanes."⁴⁰

In Tonnerre's desire for well bounded, easy to survey spaces, it is not difficult to read the ideas espoused by preceding medical authorities and missionaries. Tonnerre's descriptive language, as Chattopadhyay points out, "continued Ranald Martin's legacy of portraying an inherently defective landscape and a barbarous people untutored in the science of sanitation."⁴¹ The idea of the 'model' bustee evoked a desperate belief that disease could be contained once the boundaries and rules of surveillance were in place. The overwhelming concern became the removal of the *bustees* and with it cholera from the white town. The European part of the city was less affected by the disease, but by no means immune to it. Of course such premises were based on the belief of separate and distinct 'black' and 'white' towns.

When Tonnerre made his recommendation he had the cholera epidemic in mind. He reminded his readers that the International Sanitary Conference had implicated Bengal, and partially Kolkata, as the originating point of the epidemic that had devastated Europe.⁴² Again in 1873, quoting Martin from 26 years earlier, and in tones of bleak desperation, again Tonnerre comments on the *bustees*, stating that, "as long as they are allowed to remain a permanent disgrace and a source of danger to the town, I shall never cease to draw attention

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 80

⁴² *Administration Report of the Calcutta Municipality, 1872*, p. 9

to the present state of things, which absolutely nullifies the benefits of the water supply and drainage operations.”⁴³

According to, Swati Chattopadhyay, “the designation of bustees as hotbeds of cholera flourished in the 1870’s and continued in the 1890’s with the approval of the Bengal Government and the Army Sanitary Commission.”⁴⁴ The origins and character of transmission of cholera had been furiously debated through most of the nineteenth century. Long after its water-borne nature was recognized in Europe, following the work of John Snow in 1847, European medical practitioners in India continued to support the belief that the disease was spread through the air. Even those who recognized the improvement in mortality following the increased supply of pure drinking water in the city maintained the miasmatic theory. Of course, if the Indian Government wholly accepted Snow’s water-borne theory, they would be required to radically improve the city’s water supply, which would mean huge capital investment.

Filtered water began to be supplied by the municipal government in 1870.⁴⁵ The core of an underground drainage system was proposed in 1858, sanctioned in 1859, and laid down between 1860 and 1875. It covered an area of 7.5 square miles (19.2 square kilometres) in the central area of town. Between 1891 and 1906, sewerage was provided to 12.5 square miles (32 square kilometres) in the new southern European areas of the city.⁴⁶ Following the introduction of water and sewerage treatment, cholera deaths dropped dramatically. According to David Arnold, Kolkata suffered between 2500 and 7500 deaths from the disease every year, from 1841 to 1865. Between 1870 and 1900, and despite the city’s rapid growth in the second half of the century, numbers only exceeded 3000 in one year (1895).⁴⁷ Of course,

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.4

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 82

⁴⁵ A water works was set up at Palta, about 30 km north of the city, for tapping and purifying the water of the Hugli. (Source: Biswas, Anil Baran, ‘Water Supply in Calcutta,’ in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 160

⁴⁶ Nath, K. J. and Majumdar, Arunava, ‘Drainage, Sewerage and Waste Disposal,’ in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 167

⁴⁷ Arnold, ‘Cholera and Colonialism in British India,’ p.124

the areas covered by water and sewerage treatment, suggest that it was the Europeans who gained benefits first, then middle-class Indians, and finally the poor.

The meagre resources of the municipality continued to be severely strained by these costly schemes. Monidip Chatterjee points out, “one of the most comprehensive schemes for street improvement, made by Lieutenant Abercrombie, Superintendent of Roads and Conservancy . . . remained largely unaccomplished and was finally abandoned in 1888-89.”⁴⁸ Beadon Street (now Dani Ghosh Sarani), with Beadon Square or Rabindra Kanan, in 1868; Grey Street (now Arabinda Sarani) in 1873; and Upper Strand Road were the much belated and partial realisation of Abercrombie’s grand town planning schemes. Canning Street (now Biplabi Rasbihari Basu Road) was also built during this period, in 1863; and between 1889 and 1892, the important Harrison Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road). Most of these roads were through Indian parts of Kolkata, and have the distinguishing straight broad colonial alignment (figures 4.6 - 4.10).

Barabazaar Health Report

In 1899, Frank G. Clemow and William C. Hossack completed a health report on Barabazaar, titled, *Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar), Calcutta*, that claimed to be, “the first attempt to describe systematically and fully the area from a sanitary point of view and to bring home the shockingly insanitary condition and the terrible expenditure of life and health which this entails upon the inhabitants.”⁴⁹ It looked at a number of topics including: circulation of air round buildings; admission of light and air to the interior of buildings; water supply; removal of refuse, excreta and waste water; construction of roads; provision of public conveniences; and, the control of nuisances. The report looked in detail at the sanitary condition of certain special buildings and areas, before listing the causes of these conditions. According to Clemow and Hossack, these boiled down to, overbuilding, errors of building, habits of the ‘native’ occupants, and, overcrowding.

⁴⁸ Chatterjee, ‘Town Planning in Calcutta,’ p. 138

⁴⁹ Clemow, Frank G., and Hossack, William C., *Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar), Calcutta*, Caledonian Steam Printing Press, Calcutta, 1899, p. 62



4.6. Beadon Street (Dani Ghosh Sarani). Photographed Easter 2003



4.7. Grey Street (Arabinda Sarani). Photographed Easter 1999



4.8. Upper Strand Road. Photographed August 2000



4.9. Canning Street (Biplabi Rasbihari Basu Road). Photographed Easter 1999



4.10. Harrison Road (Mahatma Gandhi Road). Photographed Easter 1999

The area covered by the report was 217 acres (figure 4.11). Clemow and Hossak wrote that Barabazaar consisted of, “extremely valuable property in an intensely insanitary state.”⁵⁰ They divided the Ward into four zones: a western area running from the northern to the southern boundary of the ward, and lying between the river and Strand Road; a northern area, bounded by Cotton Street on the north and Armenian Street on the South; a central area, bounded by Armenian Street on the north and Canning Street on the south; and, a southern area, extending from Canning Street on the north to the southern boundary of the ward. Of these areas they considered, the northern, central and certain portions of the southern, to be the most insanitary, and wrote:

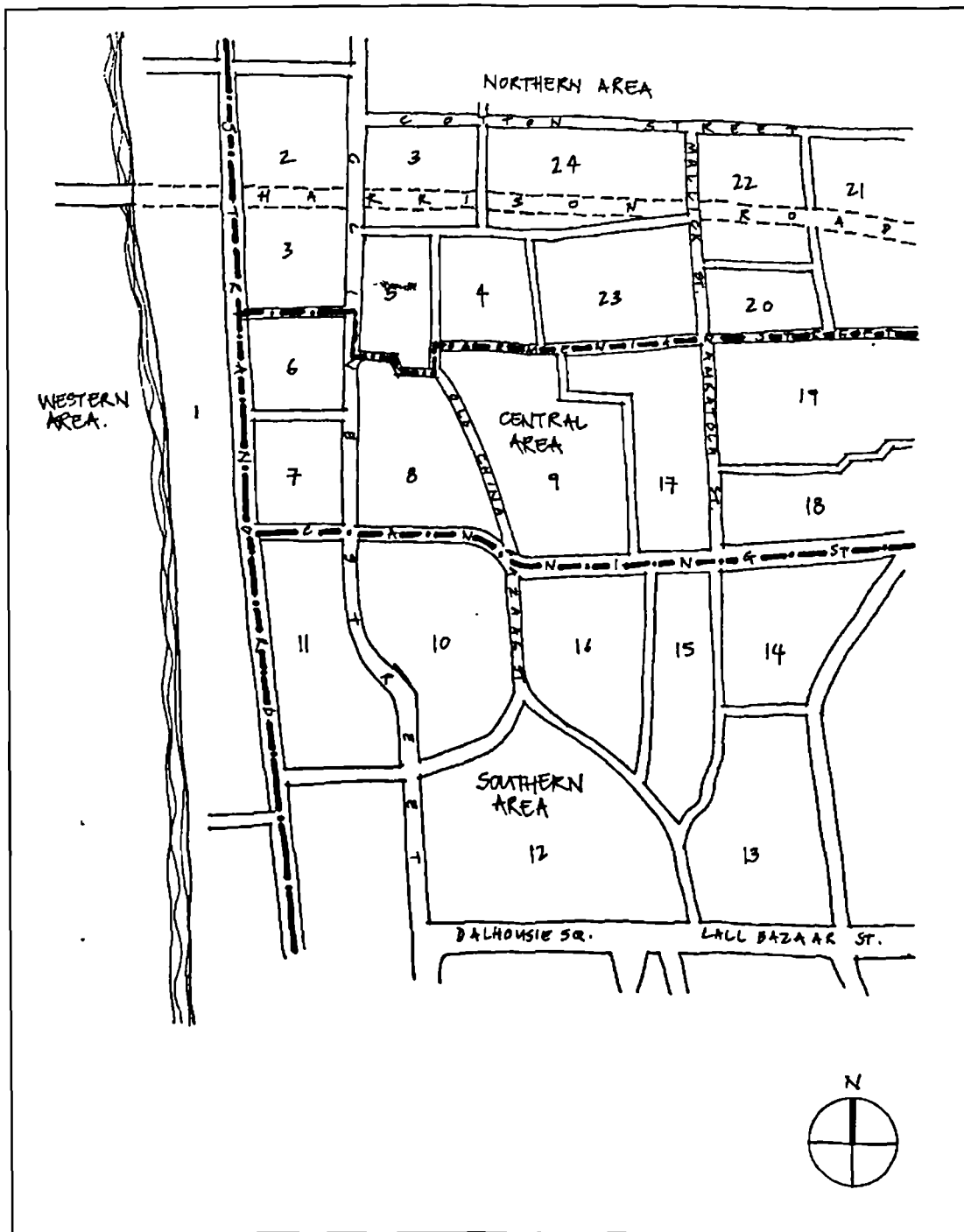
“The excessive and reckless overbuilding which has been allowed in the past, the accumulations of filth and rubbish, the overcrowding, the abominable conditions in connection with the dry removal of excrement, the foul and stinking state of innumerable narrow passages, alleys and courts, the shocking condition of certain bustees and kutcha tenements - all these . . . combine to make this ward one of the worst areas of its size in any city with which we are acquainted.”⁵¹

Clemow and Hossak defined the conditions of some of these areas, by census blocks. One example, was a *bustee* located in census block 20 (bounded by Roop Chand Roy’s Street on the north and east, Armenian Street on the south, and Mullick’s Street on the West), at 14, Roop Chand Roy’s Street. This *bustee* was where the most concentrated outbreak of plague had occurred in Kolkata, in August 1898. However, Clemow and Hossak point out that that these, “huts were in no respect worse than scores of others in which people are at this moment living.”⁵² They describe this *bustee* in detail as follows:

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. ii

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 1

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 34



4.11. Map of Barra Bazaar in 1899, showing areas covered by, *Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar), Calcutta*. This map illustrates the four zones (central, northern, southern, and western), and the numbers of the census blocks.
 Source: Clemow, Frank G., and Hossak, William C., *Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar), Calcutta*, Caledonian Steam Printing Press, Calcutta, 1899, p. 56

"The bustee abounds in filthy narrow passages, with eaves nearly meeting overhead, with broken house pipes and reeking walls, and with accumulations of filth and rubbish. The living rooms in the huts are small, and many of them entirely without light and ventilation. The mehter-served privies are in the usual foul state. The hut in which the plague cases occurred was evacuated and partially demolished."⁵³

Clemow and Hossak argued that for sanitary reform to be effective, firstly the necessary legislation should be provided by the, "educated and enlightened opinion among the governing classes."⁵⁴ In their opinion, what was required was, "the application of an Act embodying most or all of the clauses," of the English, Housing of the Working Classes Act (1890).⁵⁵ However, if real progress was to be made, the local inhabitants had to be made to understand that, "an increased recognition of the necessity of the measures enforced, an increased knowledge of the proper use of modern sanitary appliances, and - if this be possible - a really increased desire for cleanliness, light and air," were of vital importance for the success of sanitary reform.⁵⁶ Clemow and Hossak reminded the reader that, "the most carefully worded clauses in Municipal or Government Acts, and the most judiciously framed bye-laws, backed by all the powers of high penalties for their infringement, will never alter the ingrained habits of the people, or the indifference and apathy with which many of them appear to regard the most offensive surroundings."⁵⁷ Clemow and Hossak were of the opinion that, "clear instructions and guidance in the means at their disposal for helping themselves would . . . be welcomed by a large number of people."⁵⁸

Predictably, the Barabazaar report echoed many of the nineteenth century ideas described in previous health reports that were produced by the colonial state. Focused around European models of ordered urban space Clemow and Hossak's final recommendations for Barabazaar were that: overbuilding should be prohibited; new broad roads constructed; open spaces laid

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 60

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 63

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 60

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 61

out; space should be provided at the back and sides of houses for ventilation; water supply should be made constant and pressure increased; wells should be abolished; the surface around standpipes should be better paved; refuse should be put into dustbins rather than dumped on the road; Mehter-served privies should be abolished and connected flushing privies provided; better surface drainage of roads; more public latrines should be provided; supervision of dairies was required; wells privies, tanks, etc. as nuisance; minimum requirements for cubic air space per head in licensed lodging houses; standard spaces between huts, courtyards and dwelling rooms in *bustees*.⁵⁹

The Barabazaar report and preceding health maps presented statistical information in stark graphic form (figure 4.12). Increased concentration of dots, usually found in the indigenous town, indicated the most frequent occurrence of disease, and were usually the areas where road widening and slum clearance schemes were targeted. As much as anything, these maps reflected the desires and fears of their authors and audience. As Chattopadhyay states, “the power of health maps resided in the scientific illustration of the ‘native’ problem.”⁶⁰ While on the one hand the health reports seemed to challenge the idea of the ‘white’ and ‘black’ towns as distinct entities, on the other hand they cemented the characteristics of the native population, representing a chaotic landscape that constantly threatened British efforts to order and control. Cholera had become the dividing line between Europeans and Indians, albeit an extremely provisional one. As Chattopadhyay acknowledges,

“The spatial continuity between black and white towns implied by the scattered dots was distressing to a colonial imagination relying on a rhetoric of difference to constitute the colonizer and the colonized. Cholera did not respect such boundaries. The resulting anxiety necessitated that a blame must be laid at the doorstep of the native population, ensuring that cholera became the dividing line between Europeans and Indians in colonial discourse.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 62-73

⁶⁰ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 77

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 83



4.12. Health map of Calcutta in 1908, showing outbreaks of plague – each black dot represents 10 cases of plague in the immediate vicinity.
Source: Crake, H. M., *The Calcutta Plague 1896-1907, with some observations on the Epidemiology of Plague*, Criterion Printing Works, Calcutta, 1908

Looking beyond the headline statistics epitomised by the health map, some health officers presented a more ambiguous and uncertain picture. Clemow and Hossak questioned, “whether a stirring of the waters of Indian apathy and *laissez faire* in matters sanitary shall ever be possible.”⁶² However, in a final and ambiguous contradictory statement, they acknowledged that, during the course of their visits of inspection, “a large number of householders are far from blind to the gross sanitary defects around them, and are really anxious for their removal.”⁶³ Of course, health maps and statistical descriptions were far easier to digest quickly for the decision-makers of Indian Government, than more qualitative descriptions that often contained contradictions. As far as these politicians were concerned, the health maps only confirmed the nightmare of ill health, for which the ‘native’ inhabitants were to blame.

Conclusions: Competing Visions of Health

As Kaviraj points out, British writers discussing disease and hygiene, in addition, often commented about the peculiar sense of cleanliness of the Brahmin, “an odd combination of fanatical attention to personal cleanliness with an astonishing indifference to filth in his surroundings.”⁶⁴ The Brahminical sense of cleanliness and *purity* was quite different from the emergent Western ideas about *hygiene*. Kaviraj explains the Brahminical sense of cleanliness and purity in more detail as follows:

“The inside of a Brahmin house was often kept impressively clean, including utensils and other household goods. Interiors of houses were swept and scrubbed with punctilious regularity. Indeed, there was an interesting connection between these duties and the religious markings on the times of day. The household's internal space had to be cleaned at the hours of conjunction between light and darkness, at dawn and dusk, which coincided

⁶² Clemow and Hossak, *Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar)*, p. 60

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 61

⁶⁴ Kaviraj, ‘Filth and the Public Sphere,’ p. 97

with times of worship (puja). The form of this puja especially at nightfall, was to light the auspicious lamp, which had an understated piety about it and was performed by women, who shared a strong connection with the symbolism of the interior. It would be considered odd, and faintly sacrilegious, to take the auspicious lamp into a room that had not been cleaned in preparation for this most ordinary form of thanksgiving. Thus the cleaning chores were considered quasi-religious duties for household members (mostly women). Yet the garbage collected from this obsessive house cleaning would be dumped on a mound right in front of the house. This owed not to a material geographic but a conceptual distinction. When the garbage is dumped, it is not placed at a point where it cannot casually affect the realm of the household and its hygienic well-being. It is thrown over a conceptual boundary. The street was the outside, the space for which one did not have responsibility, or which was not *one's own*, and it therefore lacked any association with obligation . . .⁶⁵

Thus the Bengali notion of 'public space' - the streets, squares, bathing *ghats* and other facilities used by large numbers - did not constitute a different kind of valued space, a civic space with norms and rules of use of its own, different from the domestic values of bourgeois privacy. In Kavaraj's view, indigenous Indian cities performed very different historic functions to their European counterparts with their unmistakable strand of civic control. Indian cities were not distinguished conceptually and materially from the countryside, "they had no corporate life of their own to shelter and encompass the lives of the private families living inside them, which corporate life was to be celebrated in the symbolism of common space."⁶⁶ Often Bengali extended families had their main home in the country, with the house in the city serving as a trading post for business. According to Kaviraj, there was a sense that public space in the indigenous Indian city, was, "not amenable to control - not by the individual or the

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 99

restricted resources of a small family, nor by any organised authority.”⁶⁷ Of course this ran counter to European ideas about such space.

However, mirroring the changes in urban life brought about by the modern colonial state, ‘public’ life, as a concept for Bengalis was being transformed in cities like Kolkata. Kaviraj elucidates the tensions and ‘freedoms’ brought about by the modern colonial state at this time:

“To the normal anxieties of people accustomed to living in caste society, which obviated the need to meet utter strangers and improvise responses to untried situations, the new kind of colonial city sparked fears of miscegenation and unpredictability. The world outside was, on this view, inhospitable and full of danger of offence. At the same time, the English-educated middle class also responded quite positively to the prospects of self-making that the new world of the colonial city offered them, to the heady new freedom of moving out of destinies narrowly fixed by caste. They enjoyed the freedom to move from the older restrictive familial networks into friendships of their own choosing as well as to form political associations that pressed secular demands on the colonial state.”⁶⁸

Although still threatening to the sensibilities of a segmented small-scale society, for the Bengali middle-classes, the city’s promise was the large-scale operation of modernity, a world of ‘freedom,’ albeit tinged with uncertainty, rather than restriction. As Kaviraj indicates, the middle-class city represented this new ideology spatially, where the outside was tamed and governed by a civil order instead of the state of nature, which, on his view, reigned before the coming of British rule.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 94

It is important to understand that these hybrid and competing histories framed competing debates about health and hygiene in Bengali Kolkata for most of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Indeed, some of these themes are developed in later chapters of this thesis. In particular, I explore the hybrid and contradictory moves through which Bengali modernity has negotiated the distinction between the 'private' and 'public' in the Bengali home. As Kaviraj comments, *these were emergent forms that could not be identified in terms of either logic; they were, "indigenous, irreducible forms of modernity."*⁷⁰ As Chakrabarty so rightly says, "the Bengali modern is not an 'incomplete' modern or even a 'bad' colonial one compared to some 'good' metropolitan model."⁷¹ These indigenous forms of modernity were of course hybrids and one manifestation of such a hybrid was the Barabazaar Improvement Report, written by a Scotsman, namely Sir Patrick Geddes, in 1919, that is explored in the next chapter.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 100

⁷¹ Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity,' p. 26

CHAPTER 5

SIR PATRICK GEDDES AND BARRA BAZAAR: COMPETING VISIONS, AMBIVALENCE AND CONTRADICTION

“Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage . . . It is not a question of hamonizing with the background, but against a mottled background of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare.”

Jacques Lacan, ‘The Line and the Light,’ in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Alan Sheridan (trans.), The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1977, p. 99, quoted in, Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p. 85

Chapter Summary

The colonial attitudes to health and hygiene, described in chapter four, contrast with the more 'hybrid' visions that Sir Patrick Geddes' adopted for proposals for Barra Bazaar, in 1919, and that are investigated in this chapter. Geddes' ideas combined an approach that commended 'traditional' Indian courtyard houses, street patterns and external space, with more 'modern' ideas for business accommodation. I begin by defining Geddes' ideas and influences, and then explain the Calcutta Improvement Plan (CIT) that Geddes was commissioned to review. The CIT plan, typical of European urban solutions involved slum clearance and road building schemes, which were imposed by the colonial state to address health and hygiene problems in the city. I illustrate in detail the impact of Geddes' report on Barra Bazaar, before concluding that his often ambivalent and contradictory outlook to competing visions of city space, echo notions of 'hybridity,' developed by Homi K. Bhabha.

Introduction: Sir Patrick Geddes' ideas and influences

Sir Patrick Geddes was invited to India in 1914 by Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras.¹ Pentland, a liberal Governor hoped Geddes would advise municipal administrators in India about the new emerging subject of town planning, mainly by reporting on a number of towns and cities and showing his, 'Cities and Town Planning Exhibition'.² As soon as Geddes arrived in Calcutta in October 1914, he embarked on a two month journey of Indian towns and cities. On his way from Calcutta via Bombay to Madras, where the initial tour ended in late December 1914, Geddes visited Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Agra, the site of New Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad and many other places. Geddes was interested in seeing only indigenous architecture, and was later to write a euphoric article about the temple cities of the south as

¹ For books on Geddes' work in India refer to: Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, (ed.), *Patrick Geddes in India* (London, Lund Humphries, 1947); Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London, Routledge, 1997); Philip Boardman, *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes Biologist, Town Planner, Re-educator, Peace-warrior* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978)

²The Cities and Town Planning Exhibition represented Geddes' latest thinking in town planning with contributions from the United Kingdom, America and Germany.

examples of the integration of culture, history, and urban form at its best.³ It was an important part of Geddes' work in India that he was constantly searching for indigenous customs and 'traditions' that could be adapted to serve more 'modern' purposes.

Helen Meller points to three specific influences on Geddes' work in India.⁴ Firstly, before Geddes had arrived in India he had come into contact with Margaret Noble (also known as Sister Nivedita), a disciple of Swami Vivekenanda.⁵ Sister Nivedita wrote a book called, *The Web of Indian Life* (1904), about the social life and customs of India,⁶ dedicated to Geddes, which he used as a guide. The book gives a spiritual overview of Indian culture, looking particularly at the sacredness of the house, and at the role of women in society. The second influence was a book by Mrs. C. M. Villiers-Stuart called, *Gardens of the Great Mughals* (1913), which combined an account of the history of mughal gardens with a strongly feminist bias.⁷ Villiers-Stuart suggested that the preservation of these gardens, and the vital cultural traditions that it served, was the work of women. According to Meller, "Geddes was willing to see in this a way of revitalising the nurturing traditions of women in the towns and the cities where he worked."⁸ The third major influence was another book, by a public hygienist, Dr. J. A. Turner, called, *Sanitation in India* (1914), which gave a perspective of sanitation at odds with the dominant colonial view (outlined previously in chapter four).⁹ Turner believed that the water-borne sewage disposal in India was both expensive and impractical. Instead, he suggested that waste matter should be collected and used for gardening, thus eliminating the need for building an infrastructure of drainage pipes. *With Turner's book, Geddes thought he* had found a solution which could effectively clean up areas, and at the same time revive and nurture the customs and traditions described by Sister Nivedita and Villiers-Stuart.

³ Geddes, Patrick, 'The Temple Cities,' *Modern Review*, (India) 25. He also wrote about temple cities in a letter to his family, 7 January 1915 (Sir Patrick Geddes' Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NLS MS10515)

⁴ Meller, Helen, *Patrick Geddes Social Evolutionist and City Planner*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 218-220

⁵ Geddes met Swami Vivekenanda and Sister Nivedita at the 1900 Paris exhibition.

⁶ Noble, Margaret, *The Web of Indian Life*, William Heinemann, London, 1904

⁷ Villiers-Stuart, C. M., *Gardens of the Great Mughals*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1913

⁸ Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 219

⁹ Turner, Dr. J. A., with contributions by B. K. Goldsmith, S. C. Hormusji, K. B. Shroff and L. Godinho, *Sanitation in India*, Times of India, Bombay, 1914

Geddes was given his first chance to work out his ideas in the Madras Presidency soon after his arrival in India. In 1915, he wrote a report for twelve small towns in the Presidency and one suburb of Madras.¹⁰ He also offered a course of lectures, to town surveyors of the Madras Presidency, which explained his own survey techniques. Geddes wanted to encourage the surveyors to map their towns accurately and to become aware of the historical, cultural and social factors which had created them. This Geddes saw as the essential preliminary to any planning work in a town or city. As Helen Meller points out, in this context, Geddes could look at the key problem of public health, "from the viewpoint of the 'scientific' gardener."¹¹ The population of these towns numbered in thousands rather than tens of thousands, and seemed ideally suited for his purposes. Meller explains that his major point,

"was that disease and health hazards were the product of dirt and neglect.

Public health problems were thus social problems. The people themselves had to be involved in the elimination of the causes of plague, fever, and dysentery."¹²

The solutions he brought to India in the first reports on Madras were adaptations of the techniques he had developed from his work in Edinburgh.¹³ These included the themes of 'diagnostic survey', and, 'conservative surgery', as well as the importance of trees, gardens, and open spaces. These were the solutions he was to bring to Barabazaar, although admittedly with mixed results. In the Appendix to the Barra Bazaar report, Geddes compared the city survey to the diagnosis of a sick patient: "the physician and surgeon are now and ever increasingly learning the advantage of full and detailed diagnosis of the patient - including therefore acquaintance with his surrounding circumstances, and even his means - before

¹⁰ Geddes, Patrick, *Reports on the Towns in the Madras Presidency visited by Professor Geddes 1914 - 1915*, Government Press, Madras, 1915

¹¹ Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 238

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ For a summary of this work, refer to: Meller, Helen, *Patrick Geddes Social Evolutionist and City Planner*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, pp. 73-79

deciding upon his treatment.”¹⁴ Geddes described the need for a ‘Diagnostic Survey’ as follows:

“These go more and more thoroughly into the topographic facts, the local advantages, the defects and difficulties; they re-study communications, and these in relation to traffic requirements of each kind, and their active working and congestions and so on. Similarly for shops and shopping; and also for the various occupations and crafts of the given area, and throughout their range, from skilled to unskilled. They give particular attention to housing; and this of each and every class; but especially to that of the people, since this has hitherto been most neglected.”¹⁵

Geddes admitted he did not have sufficient time to prepare such a survey for Barabazaar, nevertheless, he was careful to explain his methodology:

“Every street and accessible lane has of course been studied by the writer and his assistants, and this repeatedly, both separately and together; and every place of business great or small, has been noted. Every accessible house has been entered - at least its courtyard, often its back-yard also - indeed when possible ascended, so as to form an idea at once of its immediate neighbourhood, and its own sanitary condition and repair; here with utilisation of the sanitary survey prepared by Dr. Crake and other municipal departments; and with visits along with him and other officers.”¹⁶

In the Barra Bazaar report, Geddes also explained his notion of ‘Conservative Surgery.’ He concludes the report by drawing a parallel between modern, ‘Conservative Surgery,’ and his own newly emerging ‘science’ of town planning:

¹⁴ Geddes, Patrick, *Barra Bazaar Improvement a Report to the Corporation of Calcutta*, Corporation Press, Calcutta, 1919, p. 28

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 27

¹⁶ *ibid.*

"The treatment of the many millions of wounded during the War has afforded innumerable examples to its combatant peoples, and thus to India, of the contrast from the method of the older school in power before the present generation - that of 'Heroic Surgery', with its simple and off-hand, wholesale and thorough amputations - and the modern 'Conservative Surgery' which has increasingly replaced it . . . An exactly similar contrast exists between the school of 'City Improvement', and that of 'Town Planning.'" ¹⁷

From his *Report on the Towns in the Madras Residency, 1915*, Geddes described the advantages and method of conservative surgery, in more detail which consists firstly of, "enlarging the existing lanes," and secondly, "with the addition of some vacant lots and the removal of a few of the most dilapidated and insanitary houses, these lanes can be greatly improved and every house brought within reach of fresh air as well as of material sanitation. . . ." ¹⁸(figure 5.1). In the same report, Geddes estimated the cost of his method to be only 5000 Rupees compared with 30,000 Rupees for the, "engineer's gridiron."¹⁹ He pointed out that, "the same method could, of course, be continued over the whole town and the 30,000 rupees, originally voted as the first instalment for the gridiron clearance, would go a very long way towards accomplishing a reasonable plan for the whole area." ²⁰

Thus, Geddes' approach combined concepts from both European and Indian cultures, to form new notions of city space. In a colonial world where attitudes to health and hygiene were changing on both sides, his approach not only reflects Bhabha's first process of hybridity, namely a fusing or merging of cultures, but also the shifting social reality of Barra Bazaar at the time. By contrast, urban improvements to Calcutta made by the colonial establishment were based on the often racial 'black-and-white' belief that European models of 'ordered' urban space and form were superior to 'chaotic' indigenous ideas, and typified by the

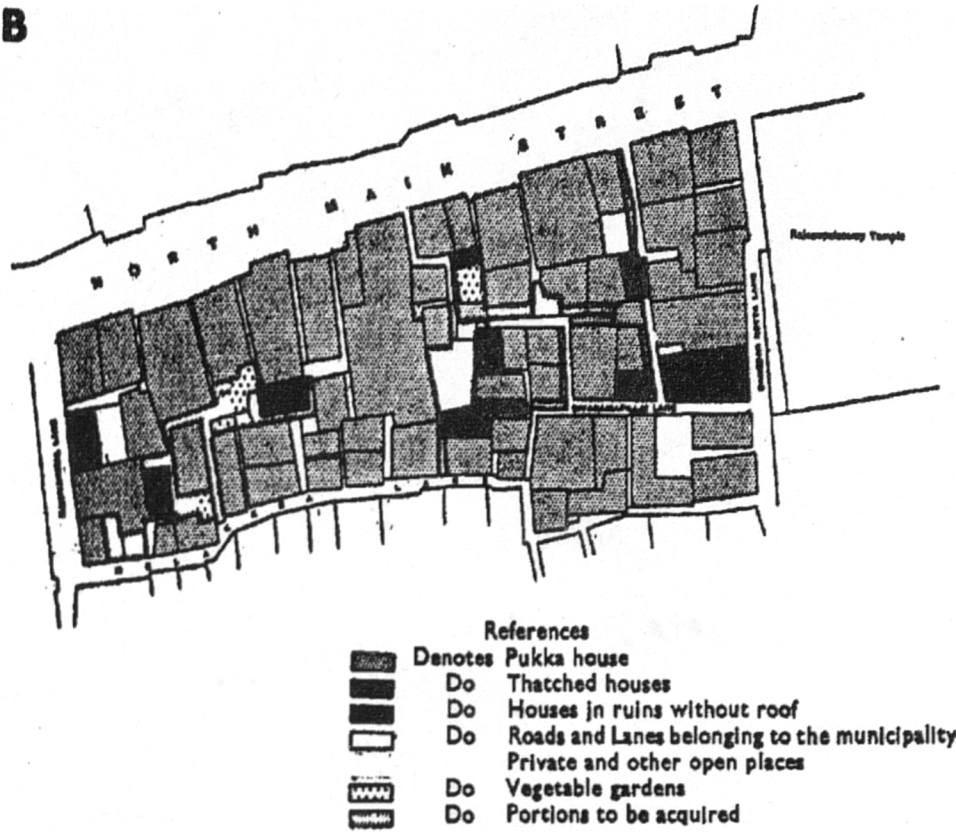
¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.25

¹⁸ Geddes, *Report on the Towns in the Madras Presidency*, p. 17. Quoted in, Tyrwhitt, Jacqueline (ed.), *Patrick Geddes in India*, Lund Humphries, London, 1947, p. 41

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

B



C



5.1. Geddes plans of Tanjore, showing an area before (b) and after (c) 'conservative surgery'
 Source: *Report on the Towns in the Madras Presidency, 1915*, p. 17. Taken from, Tyrwhitt, Jacqueline (ed.), *Patrick Geddes in India*, Lund Humphries, London, 1947, p. 42, 43

attitudes found in nineteenth century health reports and maps, described in chapter four.²¹ This was an attitude that would continue into the twentieth century, through the work of the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT).

Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, cities in India began to form Improvement Trusts and Calcutta's formed later than most, was established on 2 January 1912, following the Calcutta Improvement Act of 1911.²² According to Chatterjee, it was created, "largely in response to the critical situation revealed by a medical enquiry into the condition of Calcutta in 1896 owing to the outbreak of plague, and the Report of the Building Commission appointed in April 1897 to consider changes in the law relating to buildings and streets in Calcutta."²³ The experience gained through the Bombay Improvement Act of 1898 also provided impetus for similar legislation for Calcutta.

At the very start, the CIT's operations was carefully spelt out by its first Chairman, Cecil Henry Bompas, which were: to examine the need and scope for construction of roads; to develop suburban areas; to carry out rehousing schemes for the working classes; to prepare schemes for the widening of approaches to Calcutta; and to acquire open spaces for parks in the suburban municipalities. E. P. Richards, previously Engineer of the Madras Corporation, joined the CIT as Chief Engineer on 12 September 1912. Richards stay with the CIT was short-lived and six months later on 21 April 1913 he left; the reason given for his departure by his employers, the CIT, was that he had, "suffered from overstrain."²⁴

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of this racial argument refer to, article by the author, 'Colonial Space: Health and Modernity in Barabazaar, Kolkata,' *Traditional Dwellings and Settlement Review*, XIV, II, June 2003, pp. 7-19

²² The Calcutta Improvement Trust was established later than most being delayed until after the capital was moved from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911.

²³ Chatterjee, Monidip, 'Town Planning in Calcutta: Past, Present and Future,' in *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 133-147, p.139. Crake, H. M., *The Calcutta Plague 1896-1907, with Some Observations on the Epidemiology of Plague*, Criterion Printing Works, Calcutta, 1908

²⁴ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1913-14*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1914, p.1.

Despite Richards' departure he produced the first planning document for the whole of Calcutta, titled, *On the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas*, written partly in Calcutta and partly in Ware, Hertfordshire, between January 1913 and March 1914, and published from England in 1914, where he was recovering. In the preface to Richards' report, he cites a range of reasons for why it took so long to write, but stops short of linking these reasons to the deterioration of his own health. These seemed to boil down to lack of human resources and specifically included; "excessive outside advice and controversy"; and, "the interminable re-designing, investigation and preparation of replies to meet hundreds of scheme 'objectors'".²⁵ Of course, what this may highlight is increasing evidence of differing visions of health and hygiene than those typically prescribed by the colonial establishment.

The report recognized the integral importance of the suburbs and indeed the entire region outside the municipal city limits. Richards identified what he saw as the weakness of the CIT in this respect, as it was not created under a Town Planning Act. Indeed, the Calcutta Improvement Act of 1911 was based almost word for word on Part 1 of the English Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. Therefore Richards drafted in his report a Town Planning Act as supplementary to the Calcutta Improvement Act of 1911, which would be sufficient to deal comprehensively with the suburbs and contiguous areas as well as the inner city. He then proceeded to lay out the best that could be done under the 1911 Act, namely schemes limited to 'urban Calcutta' of the time, generally bounded by the Circular Road.

Richards analysed the situation with respect to the roads, slums, parks and open spaces, water supply and drainage, housing and residential conditions, and the distribution and movement of population within the city.²⁶ The report concluded by presenting nine alternative

²⁵ Richards, E. P., *Report By Request of the Trust on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas*, Jennings and Bewley, Ware, England, 1914, p. xiii

²⁶ Richards' proposed improvements included: about 21 miles of new main roads and 8 miles of widening of existing roads; about 110 miles of ordinary 30 and 40 foot streets; removal or improvement of 800 acres of slums; re-planning and development of 6,000 acres of suburbs inside the city boundaries; similar development, with laying down of sewerage lines, for 2000 acres in Maniktala (then outside the municipal boundary); likewise, re-planning of 2000 acres in the Kashipur-Chitpur area, which would one day become part of Calcutta; a new bridge over the Hugli in place of the existing one; also a second bridge at Ahiritola; rebuilding, widening or replacement of sixteen defective

schemes, with estimates of cost, for the improvement of intra-city main roads. The projected cost under his last preferred scheme was RS. 568 lakh or about £3,780,000.

Although Richards did not mention Barra Bazaar explicitly, a whole section of the report is dedicated to 'Calcutta slums', which he compares to those of western cities, claiming that, Calcutta possessed, "a far higher percentage of slum area than can be found in . . . any city of the whole western hemisphere."²⁷ Richards, in his report, linked high infant mortality rates directly to poor housing conditions.²⁸ According to Richards, in Britain in 1911, the infant mortality rates in London were 91 per 1000; for Birmingham, 111 per 1000, and for Newcastle, 101 per 1000.²⁹ Infant mortality rates in most Indian cities were much worse. In 1911, in Calcutta it was 362.1 per 1000; whilst in Barra Bazaar it was 577 per 1000.³⁰ He concluded pessimistically, that the slums were, "many times more extensive, composed of buildings of about one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half times the height found in Western slums, contain only one-quarter to one-third of the open space found in Western slums, have an infant mortality about three times that of European slums, and appear to have the highest infantile mortality death rate in the world, also the highest recorded mortality for tuberculosis."³¹

According to Richards, the 'evils' of these slums were responsible for most social problems known to mankind, including, "crime, insanity, disease (especially tuberculosis)." They were the, "primary causes of racial, mental and physical degeneration, unhealthy conditions of mind, discontent, sedition, anarchism and unhappiness." They were bad for trade, and they did, "quite immeasurable harm, by inculcating permanently and forcibly tens of thousands of young children, dirty and insanitary habits and ways of life, degraded and perverted ideals,

out-of-date bridges over railways and canals; also new bridges at several points such as Halsibagan; setting up good squares, parks and playgrounds, especially in North Calcutta. A riverside promenade road was recommended for north Calcutta, which would also be of great use in the event of increased river shipping and associated traffic; direct encouragement in every possible way to private and public-company housing enterprise; provision of normal allowance of tramway routes, of which there was a deficiency of 60 miles in Calcutta and Haora at the time (source: Chatterjee, 'Town Planning in Calcutta,' p. 141).

²⁷ Richards, *Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta*, p. 229

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 247

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 248

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 249

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 301

and familiarity with hideousness, squalor, misery, and vice.” Finally they produced, “by far the highest percentage of all bad, weakly, and useless citizens,” and were, “highly destructive of wholesome family life.”³²

Richards is pragmatic when it came to providing solutions to such ‘evils,’ largely ruling out wholesale acquisition, demolition and re-sale as being, “excessively costly.”³³ He believed that only the worst slums could be dealt with in this manner, as the CIT only had enough money to demolish about 10 percent of these areas.³⁴ Instead, he opted for ‘slum-repair,’ the precedent for which he had seen in Birmingham, and which involved forcing owners to make and pay for the necessary renovations, rather than the municipal authority. The procedure entailed medical officers identifying houses unfit for habitation and serving notices on the owners, who would then be given a written specification, and details of the work required to be carried out. If negotiations failed, an order would be obtained from a Magistrate to close the house, and the owner would be forced to make the repairs. Richards also suggested that *the municipal authority might offer loans to owners for repairs on a non-profit basis.*

Following Richards’ report, Barra Bazaar was first considered by the CIT during 1916. The problems of the area were summarised in their Annual Report of that year and echo many familiar nineteenth century colonial attitudes:

“Barabazaar constitutes the Indian business centre of Calcutta and it is recognised that in many ways its improvement is a problem by itself. The area has been largely built over by four and five-storeyed buildings, many of these have been constructed in defiance of all building regulations, and form hot beds of disease and plague. Compared with other parts of the north of Calcutta the road system is regular, but the width of the roads is entirely inadequate to the traffic, which they are asked to carry. These roads 16 and 20 feet wide, are constantly blocked by strings of Bullock carts and other

³² *ibid.*.

³³ *ibid.*.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 251

traffic mingled in almost inextricable confusion. On sanitary grounds and to facilitate the operations of trade, the opening up of the area with adequate roads is imperative, but the difficulties caused by the high price of land, the expensive nature of the buildings and value of the vested interests are very great.”³⁵

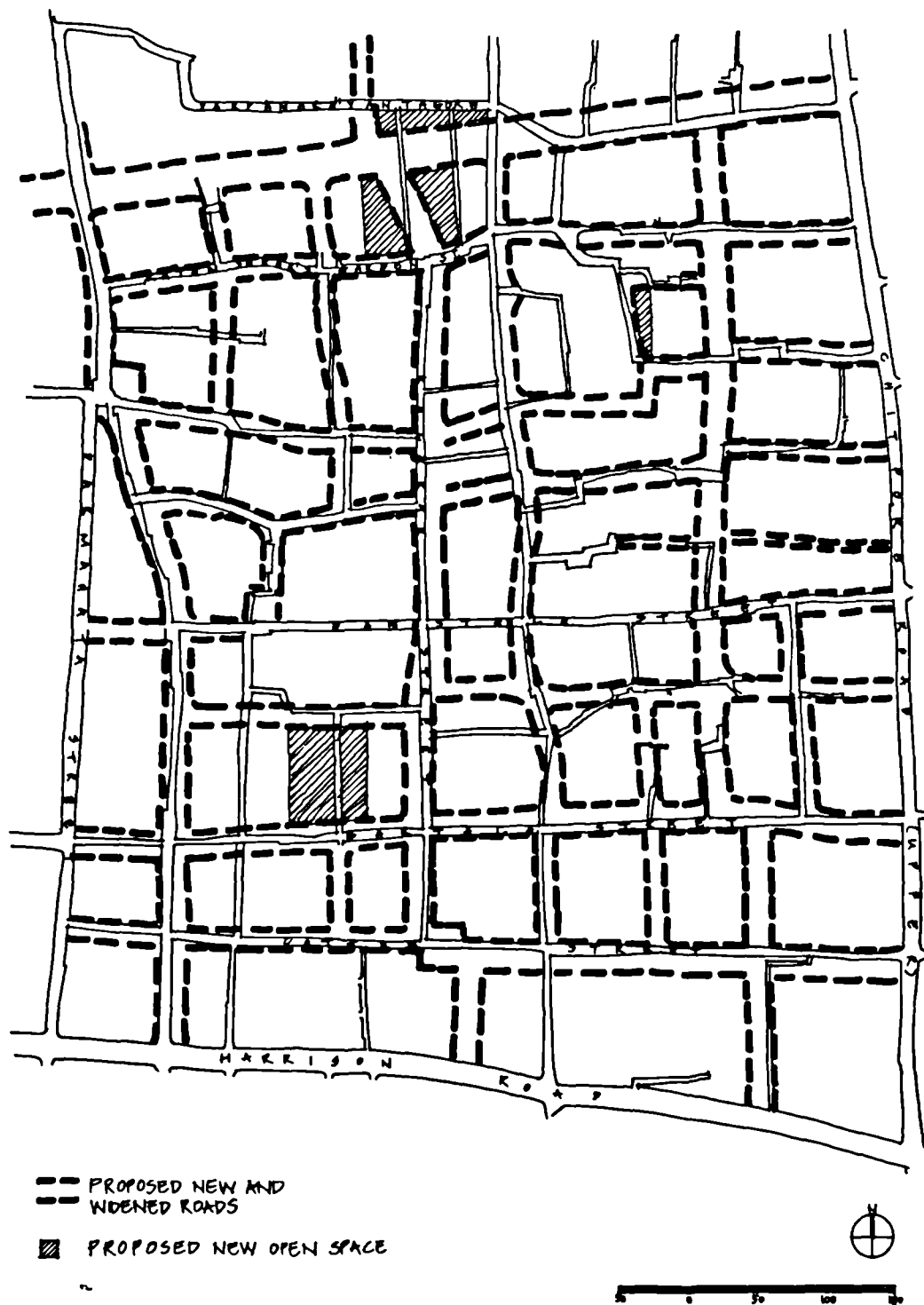
In April, 1916, the Chief Surveyor and Valuer to the CIT submitted a report on the improvement of Barra Bazaar. The report was considered at the Board’s meeting of 12 June, 1916, and it was decided that it be forwarded to public bodies and published in the press, and that the Calcutta Corporation be asked to consider it. Some time between receiving this report in June 1916 and March 1918, and despite mounting evidence to the contrary, the Corporation decided, “that Improvement Schemes could be carried out in Burrabazaar without incurring prohibitive expenditure, and that the best method with dealing with the problem was to carry out such schemes under the powers conferred by the existing Act.”³⁶ Between April 1918 and March 1919, a general improvement scheme, covering an area of 10 acres, in the south west corner of Barra Bazaar, at the junction of Darmahatta Street and Harrison Road was prepared and estimates were approved by the CIT. This scheme was published under Section 43 of the CIT Act during the same year. At the same time, plans for three proposed public streets covering the remainder of Barra Bazaar were also published.³⁷

The general proposals of the CIT predictably opted for a programme of road widening and slum demolition. The principal features of the plan were; the provision of four roads north to south and seven roads east to west; the widening of existing lanes and opening up of new lanes; the slum clearance scheme in the south west corner of Barra Bazaar at the junction of Darmahatta Street and Harrison Road; the creation of a playground behind Banstala Street, Jagomohan Mallik Lane, Bartala Street and Doyehata Street, a park to the south of Sikdarpara temple, and three parks adjacent to a new Boulevard in the north (figure 5.2).

³⁵ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1916-17*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1917, p. 18, 19

³⁶ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1917-18*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1918, p. 20

³⁷ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year, 1919-20*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1920, p. 21



5.2. Calcutta Improvement Trust Plan for Barra Bazaar.
 Source: Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, (22/1/1245)

Sir Patrick Geddes and Barra Bazaar Improvement

Geddes had become convinced that Improvement Trusts, like the one in Calcutta, instead of working in the interests of the people, especially the poor, “derived their advantage, even their survival, from the opposite viewpoint and interest, that of the propertied and land-speculating classes and their economists; by making site space and working class dwellings permanently and increasingly dear.”³⁸ Not for the first time Geddes challenged perceived wisdom on the subject arguing that, as in Lucknow, “the wide and fine thoroughfares . . . supplied by a vigorous improvement policy, have not proved profitable, at least outside the European quarter if even there.”³⁹ Furthermore, as Meller points out that,

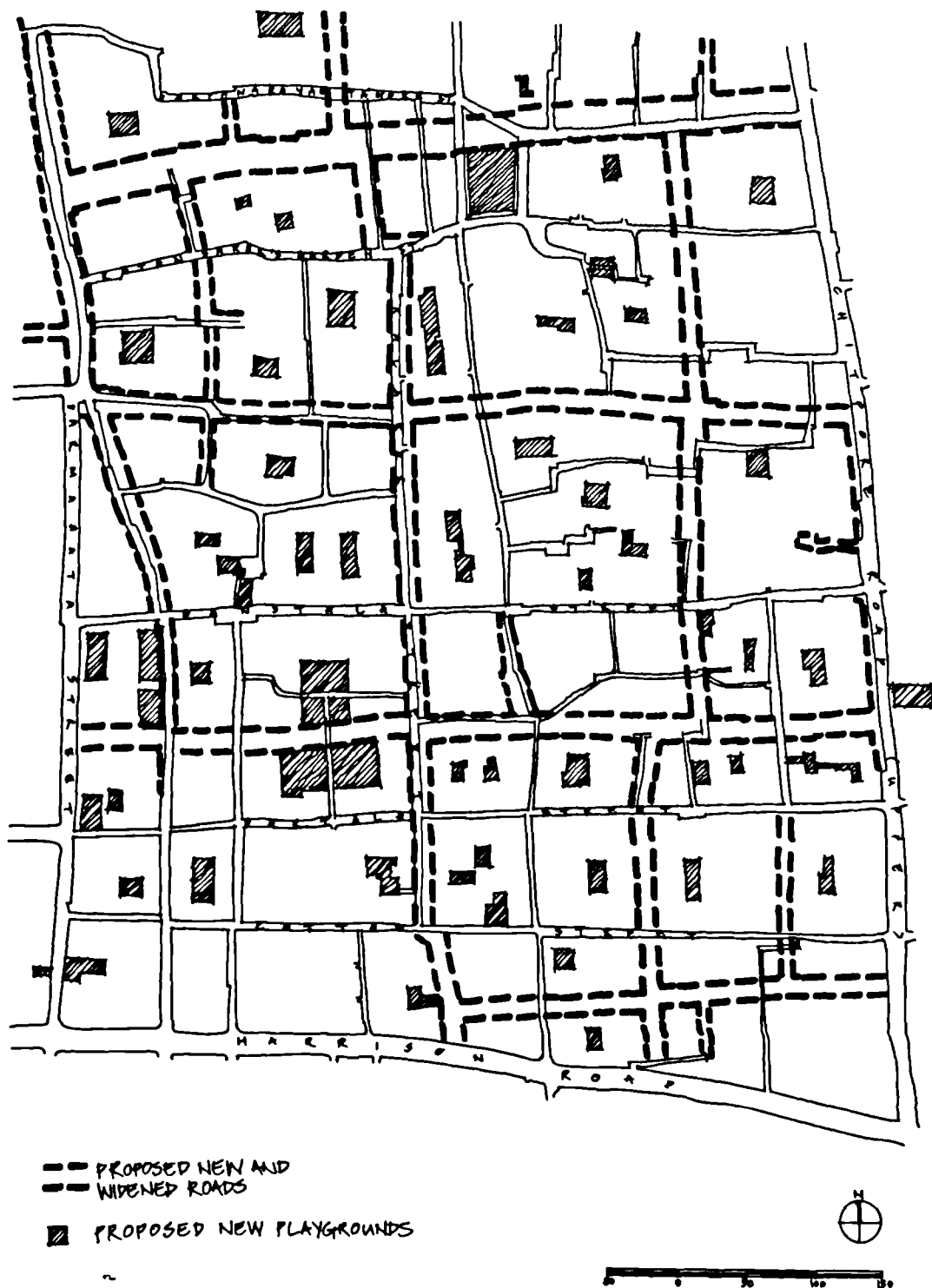
“In some cities the demolition activities of the engineers in central areas had sparked off communal riots. Tensions between Moslem and Hindu, between caste and caste, were brought to the surface by the destruction of a temple or sacred place or the location of an abattoir. A minor improvement scheme in Cawnpore had resulted in serious rioting in 1914.”⁴⁰

Towards the end of 1918, Geddes was commissioned by Calcutta Corporation to review the CIT plan for Barra Bazaar. Largely following his own methods of ‘diagnostic survey’ and ‘conservative surgery,’ Geddes’ report outlined an alternative scheme to the CIT plan, the principle features of which were; the provision of three broad roads east to west and two through roads north to south; the improvement of existing lanes and opening up of new ones; the development of an improved business warehouse and office quarter west of Clive Street and Darmahata Street (now Maharshi Debendra Road), with new business and domestic accommodation; the removal of the Mint; and, the creation of three large open spaces and of 46 small local play-grounds. The report was completed and submitted to the Calcutta Corporation on 31 March 1919 (figures 5.3).

³⁸ A letter from Patrick Geddes to H. J. Fleure, 4 April 1917 (Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NLS MS 10572). Quoted in, Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 208

³⁹ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 30

⁴⁰ Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 212



5.3. Patrick Geddes Plan of Barra Bazaar, showing final recommendations.
 Source: Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, (22/1/1245)

Thoroughfares

Geddes' primary objection to the CIT proposals for thoroughfares was that there were too many new roads being driven through Barra Bazaar, as well as too many existing roads and lanes being widened unnecessarily. Perhaps anticipating his audience, Geddes' argument against these proposals was largely economic, rather than necessarily in the interests of conserving indigenous urban forms. Geddes thought that road widening schemes were popular because of a misplaced belief that they automatically led to rises in property prices and land value.

Geddes' report began by looking at the new thoroughfares, proposed by the CIT, bounding Barra Bazaar and required for, "general city improvement."⁴¹ He gave unequivocal backing to the new north Boulevard (now Kali Krishna Tagore Street/ Vivekenanda Road), and approved with some modifications to the widening of Chitpore road (now Rabindra Sarani), and to Strand Road (figures 5.4 - 5.6). Geddes explained, that his modifications, "will be seen as of economy in reducing numbers of minor cuts upon existing valuable properties, without measurable loss of directness."⁴² However, Geddes was deeply critical of most of the CIT road alignments, stating that, "in the Trust plan the rough and ready method of the drawing-office, that of ruling perfectly straight lines irrespective of the angles of existing properties, involves great delay in execution, by increased inconvenience to householders, and increased expense to them accordingly . . . " Geddes modestly claimed that his own layout avoided, "that dreariness which is too characteristic of such modern thoroughfares . . . while their dignity is enhanced, and their directness remains."⁴³

Geddes then turned his attention to the CIT planning of Barra Bazaar itself. He began by describing the existing character of the area:

⁴¹ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 4

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 5

⁴³ *ibid.*



5.4. Vivekananda Road. Photographed August 2000



5.5. Strand Road. Photographed Easter 1999



5.6. Rabindra Sarani. Photographed Easter 1999

"Its old residential character still very largely survives; and its business area - itself overcrowded in upper storeys, and unhealthy accordingly - is still substantially concentrated into its southern and western portions. For many years past, however this business area has been spreading northwards and eastwards; so that the general impression prevails that this process cannot but continue, and must be provided for in these directions accordingly, whether by the present Trust Alignment Plan or otherwise."⁴⁴

Broadly speaking, the CIT Plan proposed to widen Cotton and Bartala Streets and also Banstala Street (now Sir Hariram Goenka Street) at each of its ends (figures 5.7 - 5.9). It further proposed to widen the still predominantly residential streets remaining to the north; and it proposed a correspondingly complete set of north and south thoroughfares. The CIT plan favoured widening existing thoroughfares.⁴⁵ Geddes was critical of this proportion, arguing that, "the reverse proportions would here have been more economical and more efficient." Geddes believed that when widening existing thoroughfares, "it is the buildings along the frontages, which are generally the largest and most valuable, which are affected." By contrast, when providing, "new thoroughfares cut through congested areas; . . . these only affect frontages at intervals, and then merely for their breadth."⁴⁶

Geddes argued for a variety of possible new alternative thoroughfares. His first alternative was that of leaving Cotton, Bartala, and Banstala streets unwidened, apart from, "minor local widenings, especially at crossings, so as to speedily decongest them."⁴⁷ For Geddes, the preservation of these streets, was, "not simply for the sake of avoiding destruction of their large and valuable premises, but for the ordinary purposes of trade and shopping."⁴⁸ The second group of alternatives looked at three possible alternative east and west thoroughfares. The first option was just north of Bartala Street, the second, just north of Cotton Street, and

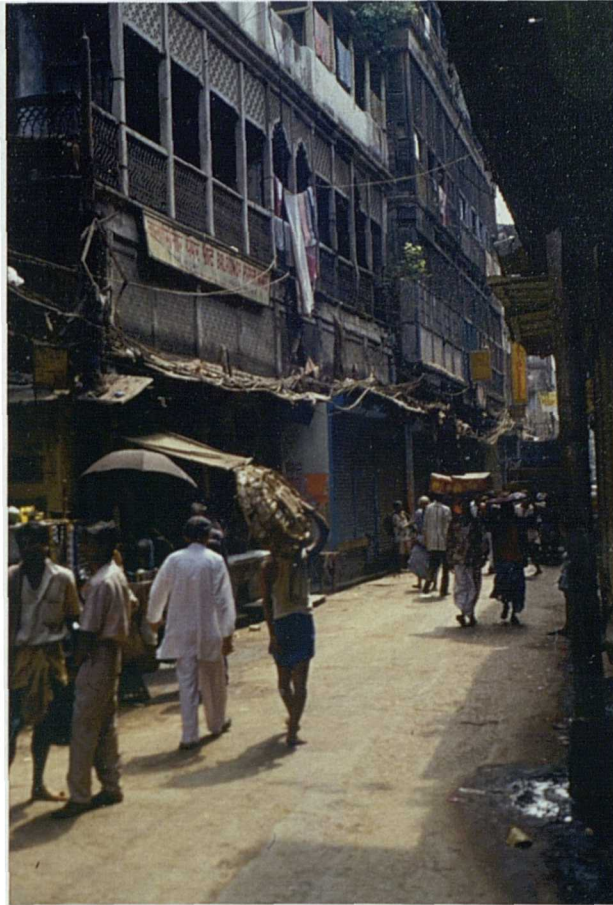
⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Geddes calculated the total extent of new thoroughfares on the CIT plan at about 4 miles 750 yds., of which, 3 miles 128 yds. were old thoroughfares widened; and about 1 mile 630 yds. were new thoroughfares, cut through existing buildings.

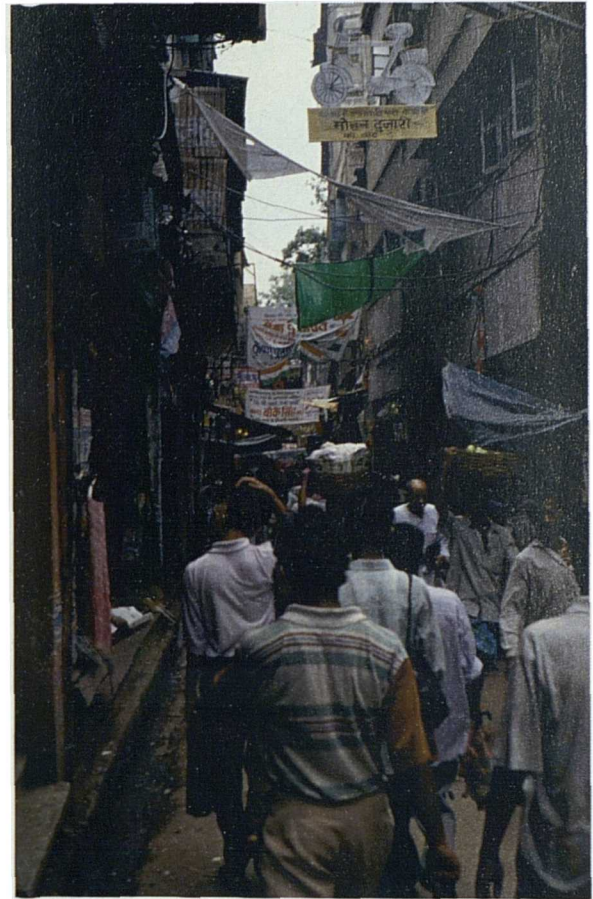
⁴⁶ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p.6

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 9



5.7. Cotton Street. Photographed Easter 1999



5.8. Bartala Street. Photographed August 2000



5.9. Sir Hariram Goenka Street. Photographed Easter 2003

the third, between Harrison Street (now Mahatma Gandhi Road) and Cotton Street. Geddes preferred option was the first as it was the least costly.

Geddes was critical also of the CIT road widening methods during construction. He believed, “the systematic reconstruction of area after area,” would have a serious affect on businesses and would increase, “congestion of the too limited communications of the whole area during the demolition and reconstruction operations.” He argued for a speedier and simpler method, where construction starts at each end of each new road, working towards the middle, and thus, Geddes claimed, leaving, “existing communications unaffected during the execution of each new thoroughfare.”⁴⁹

Geddes put forward three choices for the area between Banstala Street and the new Boulevard. The first option, involved the widening of Basak Street up to Kalakar Street, then cutting through to Sibbala Street, again cutting onto Sibb Thakur Lane, leaving it as it turns northwards, and cutting on to Chitpore Road; the second, the widening of Sobharam Basak Street to Kalakar Street and then cutting through to Chitpore Road; the third, the widening of Ganguli Lane and then cutting through to Chitpore Road. Geddes preferred route was the second option. He justified this decision because of its, “greater directness,” and, “more median position,” but, “above all, its continuity through Nawab Lane with Jagannath Ghat Street gives it great advantage; alike for traffic, and also for bathers, who are so numerous.”⁵⁰

Geddes next considered the North and South thoroughfares. Firstly, he agreed with the CIT proposal to widen Strand Road. He also agreed, with some modifications, to proposals to widen Clive Street, Maydapati Lane, and Mayrahata Street (now Nalini Sett Road), and with the proposal to widen Kalakar street from Harrison Road to the new Boulevard, although he believed it should be widened to 40 feet rather than 60 feet as suggested by the CIT (figure 5.10). However, Geddes was particularly critical of the, “excessive” amount of north-south thoroughfares in the CIT plan believing that many were too close to other major roads to warrant the disruption and cost of their implementation. More dubiously, Geddes claimed that,

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.7

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.9



5.10. Kalakar Street. Photographed August 2000

“the great pulse of the Port-City’s business, . . . has its main pulsations *across* the city, and only in a minor degree *along* it, parallel to the river.” For Geddes, Strand Road, Clive and Darmahata Streets, especially when widened, would remain its main arteries on the west side of Barra Bazaar, and Chitpore Road on the east. Geddes also pointed to the differences in the daily activities of the north and south streets, east of Darmahata Street, with those east and west, claiming that there were, “many small shops and foot-passengers in the north-south line, with the far bigger business of the other.”⁵¹ (refer to figure 5.9)

Showing influences from his work on the regeneration of Edinburgh old town closes, Geddes plans showed various improvements to lanes, “for foot-passengers only”, which included the extension of Goenka Lane to Chitpore Road, and that from Haraprasad De Lane to the south-east corner of his proposed Northern Playground.”⁵² His justifications for improvements to the existing lanes and the proposed new ones were that they would relieve congestion on the main thoroughfares. Geddes was aware of how these lanes were viewed by the colonial authorities stating how they were, “much out of fashion. . . with most large-scale planners especially.”⁵³ In a move seemingly characteristic of more nineteenth century colonial ideas, Geddes accepted that, “where necessary lanes on which no dwellings open can be provided with an iron gate at each end, to be locked at sunset by the local policeman.”⁵⁴

Business Accommodation and Business Quarter

Perhaps the most overtly hybrid vision that Geddes had for Barra Bazaar was for new business accommodation set in a new business quarter. In the Barra Bazaar report, Geddes questioned the efficiency and economics of the existing business accommodation in Barra Bazaar.⁵⁵ Typically, this was constructed around a courtyard with *godown*, or storage

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 11. Contained within the Sir Patrick Geddes’ Collection, at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, is a, ‘Traffic route diagram showing desires of Calcutta Traffic’, c. 1913 (22/1/1233). The map is inconclusive in corroborating Geddes’ ideas on the movement of traffic through Calcutta.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 12

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 12

⁵⁵ Geddes first questioned the efficiency and economics of the existing business accommodation in Barra Bazaar and suggested a possible solution, in a letter to Col. Pugh dated 3 March, 1919, (Sir Patrick Geddes’ Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NSL MS 10516)

accommodation, on the ground floor, offices on the ground and/or first floor and dwellings in the storeys above. Geddes described the character of these buildings:

“The actual amount of godown space which is afforded even around a large courtyard, is surprisingly small when the actual room-space is measured: while the inconvenience and disproportionate labour involved by this whole method is too obvious to need exposure in detail.. . . Furthermore, these courtyards readily become dirty, like the streets; while dust is constantly being raised, and thus into the upper storeys, to which their notorious unhealthiness is greatly due.”⁵⁶

Geddes proposed a unique hybrid building type consisting of two business storeys fifty feet wide, with two storeys of dwellings above. On the ground floor, he proposed compact accommodation for ‘modern’ warehouses built, “with due respect to Municipal regulations . . .”⁵⁷ If necessary, offices and shops could occupy the frontage. On the fire-proofed first floor, would be offices, or shops, with small stores or godowns behind them if required. On the second and third floors, Geddes proposed family dwellings based on indigenous urban forms built around, “an upper courtyard open to breeze and sun on at least one side and with rooms facing outwards upon balcony and spaces.”⁵⁸ In the centre of the courtyard space, Geddes designed a small fountain that he claimed could be readily adapted as the reservoir of a simple ‘sprinkler’ mechanism, for the offices and warehouses below. Geddes describes the disposition of the housing as follows:

“Such two storey dwelling-blocks may thus be adapted for all classes, and any number and size of rooms required, from those of spacious two-storey houses to comfortable ‘flats’ of various sizes, and . . .to (two or) one room dwellings; always with due bathing and latrine accommodation. In every case

⁵⁶ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 13

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 14

the stair should be carried up to the roof, which thus affords an open space for play and rest, and for sleeping out in hot weather.”⁵⁹

Geddes believed that the, “business advantages of, efficiency, time and trouble and therefore saved money presented by the new Warehouse blocks,” would persuade owners of existing *godowns* to relocate. He also believed that, “the gain in domestic comfort and well-being to each household adapting itself to the proposed change would be obvious from its very earliest cases; so as in a few years to spread even to the most conservative, overcrowded and uncomfortable of present buildings, and to modify opinion and action accordingly.”⁶⁰ He anticipated that the provision of new warehouse accommodation would free up the ground floor of existing traditional courtyard houses to give more living accommodation.

In addition to identifying new sites for businesses along Dharmahata Street, and on both sides of a widened Maydapati Lane, Geddes proposed a new business quarter west of Dharmahata Street, in a strip parallel to the river. Starting from Harrison Road, near Howrah Bridge in the south, it would incorporate the improvement of Kasinath Babu Bazaar and Burdwan Raja Bazaar, and finish at the railway in the north. The area would have to, “be replanned and rebuilt, so as to condense the existing interests and activities, yet with added efficiency and with space for bigger businesses etc., and for a considerable population as well.”⁶¹

Again, Geddes was critical of general working practices in Barra Bazaar, believing them to be behind the times, and to be in need of radical overhaul. Comparing methods of handling goods in Calcutta with those of Germany and America, Geddes pointed out that, “what in Calcutta is done by a hundred coolies and bullock drivers, with costly superintendence, end/less toils, delays and confusions, and corresponding expense can often be seen done in America by one or two skilled men. . .”⁶² Geddes called for more efficient business

⁵⁹ *ibid.*.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 15

⁶¹ *ibid.*.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 16

organisation. The model he had in mind an American 'produce-exchange' which he described in detail as follows:

"For here in one vast and many-storeyed building, normally located beside - or as at St. Louis etc., even over - the railway lines of an associated goods depot, the bales etc., are run easily or lifted vertically from the railway wagons into the warehouses, or then lowered, again with vast economy of handling, and no cartage. In higher storeys are the offices, great and small, of the bulk of firms in the given line. A spacious and well-lit hall, or even floor, is the Exchange, in which all connected with the business can meet."⁶³

Geddes acknowledged that the notion of looking to America for ideas came from, "at least one Calcutta captain of industry," who was, "already applying some of these [methods] in his own large and modern undertaking."⁶⁴ However, in comparison to his people-centred approach typified by 'conservative surgery,' the idea of product-exchanges seems something of an anomaly. Whilst admittedly improving working conditions for some, in the name of business efficiency, many people would be put out of work by them. Geddes justification was that business had to be, "replanned and concentrated, with every modern appliance - that is now needed here, to bring Calcutta business more fully abreast of the times."⁶⁵ He believed that the concentration of businesses in one area that was found typically in American cities if utilised in Barra bazaar would lead to, "higher efficiency and economy."⁶⁶ Again rather optimistically, Geddes thought that as this business quarter filled up congestion in Barra bazaar would correspondingly diminish. Perhaps he thought that if he offered this concession to the business community, his other less commercial ideas would gain acceptance.

Lying within the boundaries of Geddes proposed new business quarter was the Mint⁶⁷ (figure 5.11). Geddes advocated its removal, proposing a lay-out for more warehouse

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 16, 17

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 16

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 17

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.17

⁶⁷ Geddes first proposed the removal of the Mint, in a letter to Col. Pugh dated 3 March, 1919, (Sir Patrick Geddes' Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NSL MS 10516)



5.11. Old Mint (1824), Strand Road. Photographed August 2000

accommodation on the site, that preserved, "the old Main Building as one of the fine architectural monuments of Calcutta, and one adaptable to public use." One possible use for the building that Geddes proposed was as a high school for Barra Bazaar; "if this idea be adopted, all blocks to its eastward must be given up as playground, hence shown vacant."⁶⁸ Geddes realised that with all the widenings, new roads, demolitions, playgrounds, parks, etc., some new housing would be required in Barra Bazaar. The new Warehouse Blocks he proposed to the east of Dharmahata Street, he claimed would, "provide over 300 rooms upon their third and fourth storeys, over their warehouse and office floors."⁶⁹ In the new business quarter Geddes thought he could provide another 3,500 rooms.

Parks, Playgrounds and Public Gardens

There is little doubt that Geddes preferred parks over roads, many of which he attempted to show were unnecessary, and in his appendix to the Barra Bazaar report states that, "gardening is the healthiest recreation of man, and one of the best elements of education for children."⁷⁰ Geddes agreed with the CIT plan for a playground behind Banstala Street, Jagamohan Mallik Lane (now Kalakar Street), Bartala Street and Doyehata Street (now Digambar Jain Temple Road), and for a park to the south of Sikdarpara Temple, although he argued that it should be smaller, to avoid unnecessary demolitions. He was dismissive of the three parks proposed by the CIT immediately south of the new Boulevard as being too costly for demolitions (figure 5.2). Geddes recommended a square, "a little further east and north east of the end of Sibstala Street (which is already mainly cleared and more or less in daily playground use) be levelled and planted with trees around its margins."⁷¹

Geddes appreciated that, both crowded buildings and high land-values would render clearance for any real park impracticable within the Barra Bazaar area. Geddes was clearly frustrated at this lack of open space:

⁶⁸ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 18

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 35

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 21

"I am sorry that although by personal inclinations and experience above all I am a garden designer and park-maker. I am compelled to restrain myself from asking for any more spaces large enough to be worth calling Public Playgrounds or Public Gardens in Barra Bazaar. I can only repeat my hope that such may be found in various directions not too far from its area."⁷²

Instead of large parks, Geddes proposed forty six small playgrounds occupying a total space of 2.89 acres (8 bighas 15 kottahs). Geddes plan proposed an extra 2 acres of open space above that proposed in the CIT plan.⁷³ Again appealing on health grounds, and echoing E. P. Richards approach described earlier, Geddes asks, "those who may grudge these two acres to the health and pleasure of the rising generation," that they do not solely, "sacrifice a far greater number of acres on the altar of supposed utility, for street widenings or for new thoroughfares."⁷⁴ He justified these playgrounds further by referring to infant mortality rates:

"among these children the amount of sickness and the rate of their mortality . . . is the disgrace of our cities, and the heart-break of their homes. More playgrounds must therefore somehow be found: else all other sanitation must remain inadequate, and disappointing accordingly."⁷⁵

Following his own philosophy of 'Conservative Surgery,' he proposed the demolition of, "some of the unsatisfactory interior houses, at due intervals, thus forming open courts in which neems, palms or other trees (not sacred) can be planted; and which can be used as local playgrounds; i.e. for the children of their immediate neighbourhood"⁷⁶ (figure 5.12). According to Geddes, the houses proposed for demolition, were, "the ill-built or ill-ventilated, un-repaired and even dilapidated tenements of Barra Bazaar, which lie behind the frontage houses,"⁷⁷ and were mostly in Dr. Crake's (Health Officer for the Calcutta Municipality) lowest category of classification of dwellings, from the sanitary point of view. Geddes was optimistic about the

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ The CIT plan proposes an area of 1.98 Acres of open space, Geddes proposes 4.15 Acres.

⁷⁴ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 23

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.22

⁷⁷ *ibid.*



5.12. Courtyard house off Cotton Street. Photographed Easter 1999

outcome of such playgrounds, claiming to have long practical acquaintance with, "many such playgrounds in other cities - as notably in the worst quarters of Old Edinburgh and Old Dublin, and in American cities, which alike present all the evils of Barra Bazaar and more, indeed too often in exaggerated form."⁷⁸

Conclusions: Ambivalence and Contradiction

During the year after Geddes submitted his report on Barra Bazaar, the CIT submitted to Calcutta Corporation, the general improvement scheme in the south-west of Barra Bazaar, at the junction of Darmahatta Street and Harrison Road (figure 5.5), and the three road alignment schemes. The CIT delayed proceeding with the Improvement Scheme until a final decision was reached concerning the alignments of the proposed streets. Following objections and, "fresh complexities arising in the course of their scrutiny,"⁷⁹ the alignments of these proposed streets were not decided upon until March 1921. Both the improvement scheme and the road alignments were submitted for the sanction of Government between April 1921, and March 1922. Sanction was received for the three streets on 28 April, 1922, and for the Improvement scheme on 6 June 1922.⁸⁰

The CIT increasingly believed, that the improvement of Barra Bazaar, "hinged upon the removal of the Mint from its present site."⁸¹ The Mint occupied land on both sides of Strand Road, measuring about 37 bighas, and the question of its removal was first discussed by the CIT and the Government of India at a meeting held on 9th July, 1919. A Government committee was appointed to consider various sites. Initially they looked at the old Royal Indian Marine Dockyard at Kidderpore, however, this was ruled out because the Port Commissioners decided that the site was necessary for their own ship-building yard. The Government of India considered three other sites for the Mint buildings, namely; a site

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 23

⁷⁹ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year, 1919-20*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1920, p. 21

⁸⁰ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year, 1922-23*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1923

⁸¹ *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year, 1919-20*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1920, p. 21

belonging to the military authorities at Hastings; a site at Dhakuria opposite the Jodhpur Club; and a site on the East side of Russa Road and just North of the Eastern Bengal Railway Bridge. The CIT considered the latter site to be the most suitable, "as it would provide a frontage on the Russa Road of 550 feet and with a depth of 1,950 feet a compact area of 75 Bighas could be arranged suitable for the Mint and the accommodation of the operatives."⁸² Between April 1923 and March 1924, the Government of India opted for the removal of the Mint Buildings to the Russa Road site and was negotiating on the question of the cost of transfer. However, the issue of the removal of the Mint, was further complicated as it was proposed that a portion of the existing Mint site be utilised in connection with the approach of the new Howrah Bridge. Until the site of the new Bridge was finally decided upon by Government, work on the Mint site could not be started.⁸³

The Calcutta Corporation compared Geddes' proposals with the general proposals of the CIT and, "found that according to Prof. Geddes' scheme about 50 percent. of the houses would remain in their present condition without any improvement, that large blocks of insanitary areas would not be sufficiently opened up and that the Trusts proposals would provide more road accommodation." The Corporation dismissed his ideas about small local playgrounds, "as it was considered that these small patches of ground surrounded by high buildings with access through narrow lanes would not serve any useful purpose and would be used for dumping refuse."⁸⁴ However, the Corporation did adopt some of the alignments suggested by Geddes for road improvements and his proposal for a large park to the north of Ratan Sarkar Garden Street. They also suggested that the idea of a general improvement scheme should be abandoned in view of the enormous destruction of property and dislocation of business it would entail.

With some exceptions, most of the new roads proposed by the CIT and by Geddes were never implemented. However, the new north Boulevard (now called Kali Krishna Tagore

⁸² *Annual Report on the Operations of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year, 1921-22*, Calcutta Improvement Trust, 1922

⁸³ The new Mint Building finally ended up on Diamond Harbour Road, New Alipur

⁸⁴ *Report on the Municipal Administration of Calcutta for the Year 1919-20*, Corporation Press, Calcutta, 1920, p. 17-18

Street) was completed in 1928. Chitpore Road (now called Rabindra Sarani) and Strand Road were widened in places. Clive Street (now called Maharashi Debendra Road) was widened, Maydapati Lane and Mayrahata Street (now called Nalini Sett Road) were widened from the junction of Cotton Street northwards to the new north Boulevard. Kalakar Street was also widened to become the main north-south road through the area. Geddes' Business Quarter was never realised. His vision for new 'produce-exchanges' was never realised. However, some new warehouse and housing accommodation was built on the triangle of land between Maydapati Lane, and Darmahata Street. This was the area Geddes had proposed for 300 homes. The Mint building now remains unoccupied, the land around it still undeveloped. The park north of Ratan Sarkar Garden Street proposed by Geddes is now a rubbish dump.

On the face of it, Geddes' impact on Barra Bazaar would seem to be limited. He was not only criticised by the British colonial establishment, but also by the Indian businessmen of Barra Bazaar. Indeed Geddes seemed to anticipate the criticism admitting in one of the appendices to the report that, "every town-planning scheme has to meet abundant criticism; and this from every point of view, local and general; e.g. from those of the individual as householder, as businessman, etc., from the local communities and trade interests to those of the well-being requirements of the city as a whole."⁸⁵ Geddes found himself committed to trying to put his civic reconstruction doctrine, with its commitment to places and people, in an urban context where the interests of the market were paramount. His approach was arguably out of step with the pace of change of aspects of modernisation in certain sections of the community in Barra Bazaar.⁸⁶ More generally, perhaps Geddes was out of step with the pace of change of certain aspects of modernisation in India. As Meller suggests, "while Geddes was eulogising about ancient Indian urban forms, and the domestic arrangements, for example, of courtyard houses (usually the first target for demolition by British sanitary engineers), leaders of the Indian National Congress were taking their own families from traditional homes to the new-

⁸⁵ Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 27

⁸⁶ In a letter from the Marwari Association of Calcutta, to the CIT, dated 26 March 1912, The Secretary, Ram Dev Chokhany, whilst acknowledging the difficulties of displacing people from their homes and the need to keep any rise in land and property prices to a minimum, argues for a significant road widening programme. (Source: *Report on the Municipal Administration of Calcutta for the Year 1912-13*, Corporation Press, Calcutta, 1913, pp. 27-30)

style bungalows.”⁸⁷ There was always an inherent conflict in his work between preserving ‘traditional’ urban forms, and steering a path into the ‘modern’ world. This is the ambivalence at the centre of Geddes’ position.

Despite these criticisms, Geddes was adamant that his methods were the way forward, and he attached a number of appendices to the report trying to put his message across more forcefully. In these appendices, he argued for the need for a city and local survey, defended the appropriateness of traditional Indian houses such as the courtyard house, warned against the widening of too many streets, advocated the need to regulate the height of buildings, argued for re-housing of the labouring classes, warned about demolitions and social unrest, described the possibility of cheap housing solutions, the importance of roof gardens, and the desirability for a riverside promenade. As Helen Meller reminds us, “the way Geddes expressed most of his planning ideas in his reports was designed to goad civic administrations into a new perception of their duties, and to avert some of the damage they were causing,”⁸⁸ and the appendices to the Barra bazaar report were there for this purpose.

Geddes was clearly offering an alternative approach to the colonial establishment of the day, combining ideas from both European and colonial cultures, an early ‘hybrid’ approach, with all its uncertainty and ambivalence. The themes of his own work, ‘Diagnostic Survey’ and ‘Conservative Surgery,’ whilst having European roots in his work in Edinburgh, were radically different to nineteenth century establishment ideas of health and hygiene. Geddes also acknowledged the huge part played by the indigenous population in shaping cities in India. For Geddes, meeting and interviewing the people of Barra Bazaar was essential so that a mental picture could be formed, “of the daily life and working of the district in its various branches of activity and of these in their action and reaction with the city as a whole.”⁸⁹ When the Barra Bazaar report was produced, he had become shunned by the British Administration, and in Calcutta had become involved with Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Jagadis Bose. As Helen Meller points out Geddes identified, “the search for a regional identity, the built

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 221

⁸⁸ Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 205

⁸⁹ P. Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement*, p. 27

environment which encapsulates its form and history, and the conscious cultivation of cultural diversity, . . . issues which remain perennially pertinent.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 326

CHAPTER 6

HYBRID ARCHITECTURES: 'PUBLIC' AND 'PRIVATE' LIFE IN THE COURTYARD HOUSES OF BARABAZAAR

“The courtyard house thus predominates from Coromin as far north as Paris; but this is somewhat too far north for it, and there it ends. For with all its quiet homeliness and its shade, its health depends upon the daily access of the sun: and when this becomes shut out, as happens in the North - or even the cold season of the Tropics, when its storeys exceed three - it becomes insanitary accordingly. Hence, it is that it has practically never come into being in the Northern countries. Our British objection is thus fully justifiable at home; and here also, where height is excessive. Yet only are there a substantial number of spacious courtyard houses in Barra Bazaar, but a great deal more fairly good and habitable ones; which, especially as the world now goes, no city can afford to destroy, speculative hopes and endeavours, even successes notwithstanding.”

Patrick Geddes, *Barra Bazaar Improvement: A Report to the Corporation of Calcutta*, Corporation Press, Calcutta, 1919, p. 28

Chapter Summary

The last two chapters set the broad 'urban history' of Barabazaar. This chapter focuses on a past and present-day hybrid sense of place, generally found in the middle-class Bengali home, and more specifically in six courtyard houses owned by five families in Barabazaar. I begin by outlining some past notions of 'public' and 'private' space in these courtyard houses. I explain three primary precedents for the case studies, namely, Nabakrishna Deb's complex of houses in Shobhabazaar, and two houses owned by the Mallik family on Darpanarayan Thakur Street. After describing the social organisation of the courtyard house, and highlighting the impact of factors such as *Durga Puja*, and *Vastu Shastra* on these houses, the distinction between contemporary 'private' living and 'public' work space is explored more fully in the case studies. I conclude by describing the changes in fortunes of the Bengali community in the late nineteenth century and the rise of the Marwari, before reflecting on the changing and contradictory distinction between 'private' and 'public' life being negotiated today, and the importance of hybridity theory in 'translating' these places.

Introduction: Notions of 'Public' and 'Private' Space

Philippe Ariès, in *A History of Private Life*, insists that it is the role of the citizen, or positioning of the individual with regard to the modern state, that relates fundamentally to the distinction between the 'private,' and 'public.'¹ Ariès states that, "the entire history of private life comes down to a change in the forms of sociability: from the anonymous social life of the street, castle court, square, or village to a more restricted sociability centred on the family or even the individual."² For India, what this meant was that as the colonial state affected increasingly the everyday lives of Indians, so their 'public' and 'private' lives began to change. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to realise that by 'private life' I mean family life in the

¹ Ariès, Philippe, 'Introduction' in, Roger Chartier (ed.), *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ma., USA and London, 1989, p. 9, quoted in, Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity: Public Debates in British Bengal,' *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 36, Autumn 1993, pp. 1-34, p. 2. Ariès also highlights changes in literacy, and religion as important factors in changing attitudes to 'private' life.

² *ibid.*

courtyard house, and that by 'public life' I mean life outside the courtyard house, specifically the worlds of work and religious ritual.

The social group that was most strongly attracted to the British colonial model of the modern state, and its attendant issues concerning the separation of the 'public' and the 'private,' were the Bengali middle classes, or *bhadralok*, found in the courtyard houses of Kolkata. In Kolkata, the Bengali educated middle classes have been characterised, by Tapan Raychaudhuri, as the, "first Asian social group of any size whose mental world was transformed by its interactions with the West."³ A long series of members of this social group - from Raja Rammohun Roy, sometimes called 'the father of modern India,' to Manabendranath Roy, warmly embraced the themes of rationalism, science, equality, and human rights that the European Enlightenment promulgated. This particular flowering of nineteenth century Bengali culture became known more widely, as the 'Bengal Renaissance.'⁴ Since the colonial relationship was one that denied the colonized the status of citizen, the Bengali *bhadralok's* response to the European idea of 'public' and 'private' could only be one of partial emulation. (This argument is outlined in the introduction to chapter four, concerning issues of health and hygiene in the Bengali home.)

'Traditionally,' houses built for families created spaces for privacy of a collective kind, strictly enforced especially in the case of women in middle-class households. For Sudipta Kaviraj, "to this way of looking at the world, the home was a realm of security: stable and patterned relationships that did not contain surprises."⁵ Unsettling this world, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty, the British introduced into India in the nineteenth Century, the, "Victorian patriarchal ideals of 'companionate marriage'," which some Bengali male and female

³ Raychaudhuri, Tapan, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, p. ix, quoted in, Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p.4

⁴ For an overview of the Bengali Renaissance, refer to: Sumit Sarkar, 'Calcutta and the Bengal Renaissance,' in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume 1: The Past*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 95-105

⁵ Kaviraj, Sudipta, 'Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta,' *Public Culture*, vol. 10, part 1, 1997, pp. 83-113, p. 94

reformers embraced with great zeal.⁶ However, the idea of a typically European domesticity centred around the companionate marriage, did not easily displace ideals of Bengal domesticity and the extended family. This was an area in which many major Bengali thinkers of the nineteenth century defended and saw as the centre of 'traditional' Indian society.⁷ Kaviraj states that, "any attempt by married couples to separate from their joint ancestral families was looked upon with disfavour, as a mark of excessive individualism and sheer selfishness."⁸

For many Bengali thinkers, such notions of 'freedom' conceived in the privacy of bourgeois European patriarchal thought, meant *jathechhachar*, to do as one pleased, to be self-indulgent and selfish. In India, it was argued, 'freedom' meant pleasure from the ego, the free person being one who could serve and obey voluntarily. Deenanath Bandyopadhyay explains the Indian idea of freedom: "To be able to subordinate oneself to others and to the *dharma* . . . [and] to free the soul from the slavery of the senses, is the first task of human freedom . . . That is why in Indian families, boys and girls are subordinate to the parents, wife to the husband and the parents-in-law, the disciple to the guru, the student to the teacher . . . the king to *dharma* . . . , the people to the king . . . [and one's] dignity and prestige to the community (*samaj*)."⁹ As Chakrabarty points out, 'Freedom', undoubtedly, was a key idea that shaped the Bengali modern. However, the emergent and new individuality in Bengal in the nineteenth century was deeply embroiled in the question of defining personal 'freedom' in the context of the 'norms' of the extended family.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the concern with 'private life' or 'domesticity' was very much a part of the civilisational critique of India (an argument that I began in chapter one, and continued in chapter four, through the colonial authors of the nineteenth century health reports). Some

⁶ Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity,' p. 2. According to Chakrabarty, the story is told in Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849 - 1905*, New Jersey, 1984 and Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization*, Rajshani, 1983, footnote 3

⁷ Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Sibnath Shastri, and Haraprasad Shastri, devoted considerable time to interpreting the principles on which the Hindu family was based.

⁸ Kaviraj, 'Filth and the Public Sphere,' p. 94

⁹ Quoted in, Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity,' p. 11, 12

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 12

have debated that, the Victorian obsessions of 'discipline,' 'routine,' and 'order,' became some of the most privileged elements in Bengali writings on domestic and personal arrangements, constituting in themselves objects of desire and beauty.¹¹ The internal 'discipline' of the 'European home' was seen as key to European prosperity and political power. As Chakrabarty states, "Bengali books on 'domestic science' extolled the 'attractive' qualities of 'the house of any civilised European' which was now compared to 'the abode of gods'."¹²

At this point, what I wish to highlight are the ways in which notions of 'public' and 'private' life were repeatedly disrupted, and by inference created and upset a hybrid Bengali narrative of modernity. Mirroring changes in urban life brought about by the modern colonial state, 'private life,' and the organisation of the family home, both architecturally and in terms of social practices, was evolving radically in cities. (These themes of a changing urban life and hybrid Bengali modernities are developed from the conclusions of chapter four.)

Nineteenth Century Bengali Culture

Since 1773, India had been forcibly under the administration of British Officials. The first Parliamentary Act for India of 1773, made Warren Hastings Governor-General (1774-85), and the position of the East India Company consolidated considerably. The Act also set up in Kolkata, a Supreme Court under a Chief Justice, and three Puisne Judges. The courts jurisdiction was in criminal and civil cases in Kolkata, and as a court of appeal for Europeans and those Indians choosing to submit to it, for the entire Presidency. In 1793, Lord Cornwallis (Governor-General, 1786-93, 1805) introduced throughout the three Mughal provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, a legislative instrument called 'Permanent Settlement.' It was aimed at rationalising the principal of taxation of land and, as some have argued, to create a class of landowners loyal to the colonial power.¹³ Permanent Settlement attributed land ownership *de-facto* to the landlords, or so-called *zaminders*, until 1793, tenant holders of the land by hereditary right and subject to payment of annual taxes to the Court of Murshidabad.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 5

¹² *ibid.*, p. 5

¹³ Ottolenghi, Roberto, "The Calcutta Syndrome, A Difficult Mediation Between Colonial and Modern," *Lotus International*, No. 34, 1982, pp. 35-45, p. 35

According to Burton Stein, "Permanent Settlement of 1793 had vested property in a landlord class created by Lord Cornwallis with the hope of forming a set of rural capitalists out of what he construed as an indigenous gentry."¹⁴ Most were tax farmers recently appointed by the Nawabs, who had succeeded Mughal governors earlier in the eighteenth century, and few of Cornwallis's new *zaminders* had any inclination to become rural capitalists. Stein continues, "before long most of them had lost their estates to entrepreneurs from Calcutta - city men with few interests in the countryside apart from the profits to be made."¹⁵

It was this mercantile class of *zaminders*, who in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century began settling in the northern part of Kolkata and Barabazaar, to work as agents, or *banians*, for the East India Company. Chitra Deb comments that, "their common function was as intermediaries between Englishmen and Indians, whether in conducting trade, arranging political deals, collecting debts or looking after accounts and documents."¹⁶ The British ignorant of local languages and practices at this stage, had to rely entirely on them. Chitra Deb quotes Binay Ghosh, who distinguished four types of culture prevailing in Kolkata at this time.¹⁷ Of these four groups, it was the *zaminders* and *banians*, who became the new urban 'rajas,' who grew increasingly influential, and at this time, were dominated by the Deb family.

Nabakrishna Deb started his career as a junior servant in the Mughal administration, and in 1756, became Warren Hastings' Persian tutor, or *munshi*. Some commentators branded Nabakrishna, "a 'native collaborator' in founding British rule in India."¹⁸ According to Swati Chattopadhyay, "he performed intelligent service for the Company during the military campaign against the Nawab of Bengal, supplied aid to the companies army, and derived immense material benefits from the consequent dissolution of power in Murshidabad." In

¹⁴ Stein, Burton, *A History of India*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998, p. 256

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Deb, Chitra, 'The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta,' in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 56-63, p.57

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 60-61. These were: the new urban feudal culture of the city 'Rajas' in Sutanuti north Kolkata; a mercantile culture propagated by the Tantubaniks or cloth-merchants like the Sheths and Basaks, as well as the Subarnabaniks in central Kolkata; the new English culture of the European *nouveaux riches* in Gobindapur, south-central Kolkata; and, the middle class Hindu culture in Bhabanipur, south Kolkata.

¹⁸ Raychoudhuri, Subir, 'The Lost World of the Babus,' in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 68-75, p. 71

1778, the Company rewarded Nabakrishna by transferring to him and his family the zamindari rights of Sutanuti, in perpetuity, in exchange for property outside Kolkata. As Chattopadhyay states, "his role in the Company's administration increased from that of a political *banian* to include the office of petitions, the treasury, the *dewani* and collectorate of 24-Paraganas, and the *jati-mala kachhari* (caste-court) for settling caste disputes."¹⁹

The East India Company were keen to foster ties with the indigenous elite, whom they considered 'natural leaders' of the population, and after the change in political power, it was extremely important on the part of this elite that they maintained their social visibility, and were ranked highly in the social scale of the Company. They did this by hosting huge festive celebrations, by giving to charity, and by building large palatial residences. A shrewd judge of the political climate, Nabakrishna Deb recognized that the adoption of these various forms of sociability were critical for the maintenance of a privileged position in society. He began a 'tradition' of elaborately celebrating every religious and social festival. He made a monumental event of his mother's funeral, or *sradh* ceremony. Thousands of people of all castes and calling were invited. Money, food, clothes, and utensils were distributed, and the most reputed pundits and singers were invited to conduct the ceremony. According to Subir Raychoudhuri, Nabakrishna spent nearly a million Rupees on this ceremony.²⁰

However, the biggest annual event in the Deb family was the *Durga puja* festival held in the Autumn. The 'tradition' of family *puja* was begun by Nabakrishna Deb, in 1757, when he *entertained the victorious Colonel Robert Clive* and other dignitaries after the battle of Plassey, partly in order to enhance his own business interests. As the leading family in the city, the Debs adopted a symbolic position during this important festival. According to Chitra Deb, "no other *puja* could begin before theirs: hence its announcement was announced by the firing of cannon."²¹ Similarly no one began the immersion process at the end of the *puja* before the Deb family *puja* was on its way. As the 'tradition' developed, the number of *sahibs* attending the *Durga puja* became an index of prestige. As Raychoudhuri comments, "nothing

¹⁹ Chattopadhyay, Swati, *Depicting Calcutta*, PhD in Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1997, p. 254

²⁰ Raychoudhuri, 'The Lost World of the Babus,' p. 71

²¹ Deb, 'The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta,' p.59

illustrates better the amalgam of motives in the early 'aristocratic' Babu, as well as the ostentatious pride of wealth."²² This overtly hybrid custom was not ideologically confused or a blind imitation of European manners, but arguably an astute reading of local colonial politics. According to Chattopadhyay, "this hybridity in the social and political convictions and in the cultural choices of these late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century elites was an attempt to shape a middle ground in which they retained power to ascribe meaning."²³

Of course, the change in political fortunes and social habits, cemented by Permanent Settlement, was reflected in the houses that these merchants built for themselves and their extended families. D. K. L. Choudhury broadly explains the change in architectural approach:

"Historians from Bernier to Abdul Haleem "Sharar" have agreed that under the Mughals, displaying one's wealth was considered imprudent. The British, by guaranteeing the right to private property - at least to their collaborators - released a new urge to flaunt wealth, and set new norms for the standard of living. Perhaps for the first time in Bengal, domestic architecture became a status symbol."²⁴

Deb Family Houses, Shobhabazaar

Profiting from the ascendancy of the East India Company, these merchants began building palatial houses all over North Kolkata and Barabazaar, marked by a spirit of rivalry in their construction and decoration. According to Choudhury, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a new hybridised house form had developed: the *thakur dalans* with a court, required for displays of wealth and pomp at festivals.²⁵ Nowhere is this process of change better illustrated than at the complex of houses built by the Deb family in Shobhabazaar, and begun

²² Raychoudhuri, 'The Lost World of the Babus,' p. 71

²³ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 260

²⁴ Choudhury, Dhriti Kanta Lahiri, 'Trends in Calcutta Architecture 1690-1903,' in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 156-175, p. 174

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 170

by Nabakrishna in 1764 (figures 6.1 - 6.3). The complex spans an entire block on either side of the street that now bears his name (Raja Nabakrishna Street). According to Chattopadhyay, “for the better part of the nineteenth century the mansions of Sobhabazaar remained one of the important sites of social power in the Bengali community.”²⁶

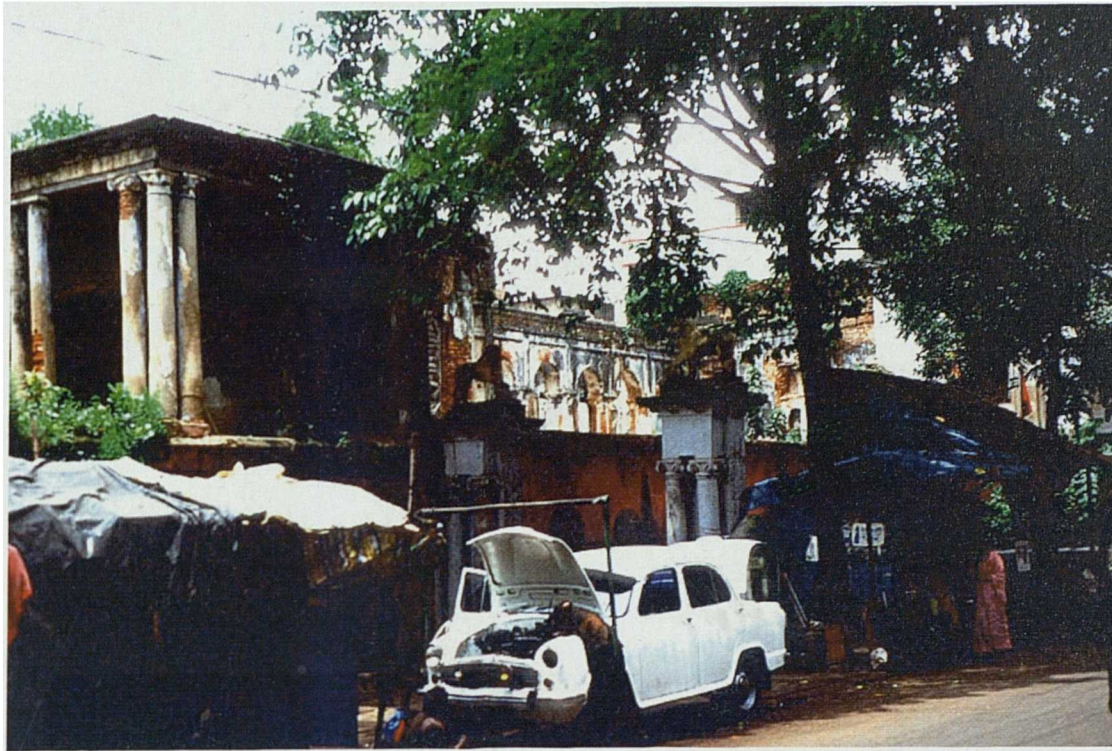
The centrepiece of the northern complex was the *bahir-mahal* with its large public courtyard and surrounding ceremonial spaces (figure 6.3). On the north and east of the *bahir-mahal* a collection of family rooms around several courtyards formed the *andar-mahal* (inner compartment), connected to the public courtyard with a series of corridors, galleries and intervening courts. The imposing west facing lion-gate (figure 6.1) to the *bahir-mahal* led to a small forecourt surrounded by the families offices and the intervening *ro'ak* (figure 6.2). A corridor in between the offices connected the forecourt to the main public courtyard. The main entrance to the court was centrally located, but approached axially to generate an impressive first view of the enclosure (32.6 x 18.3 metres). Another entrance connected the court from the garden on the west. The space for the deity, comprising two adjacent *dalans*, stood on the north side on axis with the raised entrance. According to Choudhury, the *thakur dalan* showed little European influence:

“The compound piers with their cluster of tapering shafts support cusped, slightly ogee arches, topped by a decoration of bouquet motif, long sanctified in Mughal and medieval Bengal architecture. Instead of European balusters we have a solid parapet decorated with terracotta plaques, now mostly lost. The wooden arcade gallery running on brackets or corbels along the sides of the courtyard is again of indigenous inspiration.”²⁷

Brick masonry columns and arches generated the primary spatial organisation of *ro'ak-dalan-veranda-rooms*. The necessity of closely spaced columns created long thin spaces, (2.7 - 3.7 metres wide) and spanned by wooden beams. These spaces were further subdivided to accommodate cooking and storage facilities for ritual and ceremonial purposes and to house

²⁶ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 261

²⁷ Choudhury, 'Trends in Calcutta Architecture 1690-1903,' p. 163



6.1. Deb House, Shovabazaar (1764). View from the street showing Lion Gate. Photographed August 2001



6.2. Deb House, Shovabazaar (1764). Entrance court with family offices - arches added later to give building a street façade. Photographed August 2001



6.3. Deb House, Shovabazaar (1764). 'Public' Courtyard looking south towards main entrance – dance room, or *nachgar*, on upper level.
Photographed August 2001

guests, priest, musicians, and servants. On the upper level the arcaded space was incorporated to form larger rooms. The long room on the west became the library (22.9 metres long), and the long one on the south became the dance room, or *nachghar* (16.8 metres long). According to Choudhury, the *nach ghar* and its, "tapering columns with their cushion base, slightly flared foliated capitals, alcoves in the wall, a round floral design atop ogee arches,"²⁸ is entirely Mughal in conception. It occupied a privileged position presiding over the best view of the courtyard. The lion gate at the main entrance of the Deb family house, its south-facing veranda overlooking the forecourt and the street, and the round arches on its ground floor were added at a later time to give the building a street facade. This interest in generating a 'front' was symptomatic of the new urge to display residences as symbols of wealth and status.

In 1840, the complex was enhanced by Radhakanta, the son of Nabakrishna's older adopted son Gobimohun, by the building of the Tuscan fronted *Nat-mandir*. The *Nat-mandir* was a combination of a temple and a large enclosed public hall. The 'navaratna' temple had a Muslim dome and four turrets built in a Hindu manner.²⁹ According to Chattopadhyay, "were it not for the projecting balconies and the temple pinnacles at the back, the building would not be unlike St. John's church in the city"³⁰ (fig. 1.2). The idea of the open courtyard for public gathering was abandoned here in favour of a double-height hall entered through a carriage port. According to Chattopadhyay, "nowhere had the use of a double height space with overlooking balconies been attempted in a temple before."³¹ Clearly this temple was meant to accommodate a new set of uses and meanings. Chattopadhyay continues to describe the eclectic uses for the *nat-mandir*:

"By calling the building Nat-mandir Radhakanta was reaching for a spatial idea that transcended the common gathering of the village *chandimandap* (gathering space in front of a temple, roofed but open on the sides) for something more distinctly princely and classical. A nat-mandir implied the

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 163

²⁹ A type of Hindu temple symbolising wealth and piety

³⁰ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 263

³¹ *ibid.*

patronage of a king, under whose auspices musicians, and dancers performed in the temple pavilion as part of the ritual gathering to the gods. While Radhakanta's nat-mandir mainly accommodated its obvious functions, it was also here that Radhakanta hosted suppers and balls for the City's European elites. . . .By adopting two symbols - the *nava-ratna* and the European theatre - Radhakanta literally set the stage for displaying his own position in the new political and cultural order and illustrated the capacity of an indigenous idea to accommodate new forms and encapsulate new uses."³²

Choudhury goes on to contrast the developments in the *thakur dalan* in the newer house (1789) built by Nabakrishna Deb on the southern side of the road and inherited by his younger son Rajkrishna:

"The cusped arches have become more round. Slender tapered pillars of traditional design still support the imposts; but the patera on the corners above the arches, sanctioned by Mughal usage, are gone. Paired half-columns between the arches support an entablature of classical European origin. The moulding of the cushions is Vitruvian, the *acanthus leaves* crowning the whole common in Roman Corinthian entablature; but just below is a row of what looks uncommonly like the 'spear-head' design in Islamic architecture."³³

The new house signified a transitional phase in Kolkata's architecture, when western influence was being gradually absorbed. According to Choudhury, "Indian architecture has always been eclectic in temper, and no breach of decorum was perceived in this."³⁴

³² *ibid.*, p. 264, 265

³³ Choudhury, 'Trends in Calcutta Architecture 1690-1903,' p. 163

³⁴ *ibid.*

Mallik Family Houses

In addition, Choudhury charts the process of hybridization in the two houses of the Mallik family in Darpanarayan Thakur Street (figures 6.4 – 6.6). The first, number 32, is older, probably dating from the last decades of the eighteenth century. The street front is typically inconspicuous (figure 6.5). The house is in five *mahals*, in a row from front to back, stylistically allied to the older Deb family house. According to Choudhury, “what is striking however is the ‘Adam design’ in the frieze of the *thakur dalan* with its wavy line and central vase.”³⁵ Choudhury continues with an explanation of the innovations in the *thakur dalan* of the later house, number 33 (figure 6.4):

“The spatial arrangement is still the same, the sanctum separated from the open courtyard by an arcade; but the round arches with accentuated moulding encasing a second arch within now speak a different idiom. The piers still have slender clustered pillars; but these are now straight, with European style, almost Gothic capitals. An Adam ‘shell design’ has replaced the traditional bouquet motif on top of the arches. The base of the columns have mouldings unknown in Rajasthani or Mughal style. The paired columns are ionic at first floor level and plainer Tuscan on the ground floor, a ‘correct’ arrangement that the Neo-Vitruvians could not have faulted.”³⁶

Hybrid Architectural Styles

According to Choudhury, when it came to choosing a fashionable architectural style for the houses of the Bengali elite, the preference, “was emphatically in favour of Baroque classicism rather than the stricter classicism of the Greek revival.”³⁷ Arguably neo-classicism was fashionable, because its scale had the possibility of generating grandeur, and it symbolised British rule for the elite who were eager to follow their political superiors. The first

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

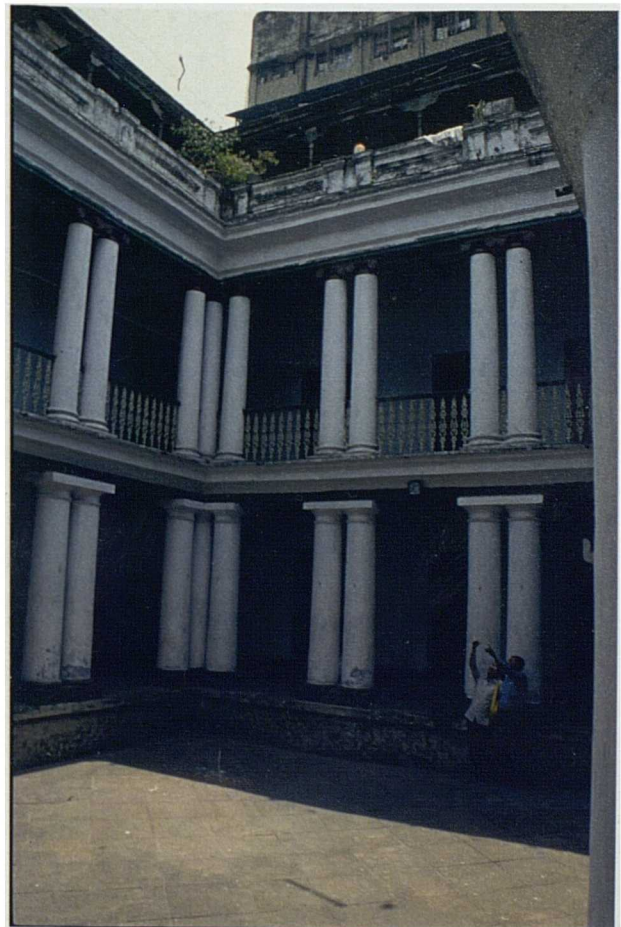
³⁷ Choudhury, ‘Trends in Calcutta Architecture 1690-1903,’ p. 168



6.4. Mallick House, Darpanarayan Thakur Street. 'Public' courtyard showing *thakur dalan*. Photographed Easter 2003



6.5. Mallick House, Darpanarayan Thakur Street. View from the street. Photographed August 2001



6.6. Mallick House. Temple building, Darpanarayan Thakur Street. Photographed Easter 2003

recognisable European style of architecture in British India was neo-classicism, and classical orders like 'Ionic', 'Doric', 'Corinthian', and evolved 'Tuscan' provided early builders with useful symbolism. The British welcomed a style that would graphically express their superiority and historical antecedents. The use of neo-classicism in government offices and residences of the European population in Kolkata was connected with the Greek and Roman legacy of empire.³⁸

The style adopted by the Bengali elite was, however, full of architectural 'mistakes.' The scale of the classical orders was often diminished to suit the size of the building and the proportions adjusted to fit narrow plot conditions. Some critics have claimed that the Bengali elite lacked a 'true' understanding of the classical order and were 'illiterate' in the grammar of the classical language.³⁹ The artist, Thomas Daniells commenting on the architectural subject matter in one of his prints stated (figure 1.11):

"In this view on the Chitpore Road (taken in the Monsoon season) appears the house of a native Bengal merchant, the style of architecture in its ornamental parts is Mahomedan, except in the turret, which is an unsuccessful attempt at the Grecian, as introduced by the Portuguese. The incongruities very frequently occur in modern Indian buildings, whose owners have intercourse with Europeans."⁴⁰

The freedom adopted in interpreting scale and proportion indicated that neo-classicism was used for its symbolic properties and not because the Bengali elite were interested in

³⁸ Examples of this during the early to mid-nineteenth century, include: Government House (1803); The Town Hall (1813); The Bank of Bengal and the Asiatic Society (1806); St James Church (1820); Bishop's Palace (1825); Bengal Club (1827); Ochterloney Monument (1828); Old Silver Mint (1831); La Martinere (1835); Calcutta Medical College (1835); Prinsep Ghat Pavilion (1843); Metcalfe Hall (1844); Bengal Military Club (1845); St Paul's Cathedral (1847); and, the Royal Exchange (1858). The 'Gothic' crept into British India, but never truly interacted with Indian building traditions, and in particular denied the vital climatic advantage of a flat roof.

³⁹ Tillotson, G. H. R., *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change Since 1850*, Yale University Press, Yale, New Haven, 1989, and quoted in, Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 265

⁴⁰ View on the Chitpore Road, from a set of six aquatints of Calcutta 1797-8, in the second volume of their *Oriental Survey* based on views taken in 1792, quoted in, Losty, J. P., *Calcutta City of Palaces, A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company 1690 - 1858*, The British Library Board, London, 1990, p. 63

reproducing the 'original' and got it wrong. In appropriating the vocabulary of empire the Bengali elite were not only adopting that which was novel, but that which enabled them to make a symbolic claim in the construction of that empire. Chattopadhyay argues that, "by manipulating the proportions and through desirable juxtapositions they could create a different meaning, not one that attempted to recreate British intentions."⁴¹

S. C. Mukherji points out that the British also broke the rules of the classical orders, arguing that they, "belonged to the community of traders, who came to Bengal or India for commercial gains, and as such were bereft of noble or grand ideas."⁴² Choudhury branded the style of architecture of the Europeans at this time, "Pariah Palladian."⁴³ Equally, there was the reverse tendency amongst the British to introduce Indian features and motifs into their so-called 'Imperial architecture'. As Mukherji comments, "soon the Eastern fancies invaded the orthodox architectural vocabulary and gave rise to hybrid architectural types combining the elements of Renaissance, Saracenic, and Hindu schools of building art."⁴⁴

All the case study houses incorporate elements of both Indian and European styles to a greater or lesser extent reflecting the aspirations of previous family generations. The Rohatgi house best illustrates the mix of cultures that have lived in Barabazaar, and was originally built by Armenians approximately 300 years ago (the house is situated opposite the Armenian Church (1724)). The house has been owned by the family since 1750, with the top two storeys added about 120 years ago. The house also incorporates more modern cast iron balustrades and columns, possibly imported from Europe, as well as metal framed windows.

The two Daw houses show the changes in architectural fashions that occurred during the nineteenth century. The later house on Sibkrishna Daw Lane, incorporates lavish baroque balconies into its architecture of obvious European influence (figure 6.7) although the 'public' facade onto the lane is restrained (figure 6.8). Opening onto the *Durga Puja* courtyard on the

⁴¹ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 266

⁴² Mukherji, S. C., *The Changing Face of Calcutta: An Architectural Approach 300*, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1991, p. 3

⁴³ Choudhury, 'Trends in Calcutta Architecture 1690-1903,' p. 165

⁴⁴ Mukherji, *The Changing Face of Calcutta*, p. 3



6.7. Daw House, Sibkrishna Daw Lane. 'Public' courtyard with baroque balconies. Photographed August 2000.



6.8. Daw House, Sibkrishna Daw Lane. View from the Lane. Photographed August 2000.



6.9. Daw House, Vivekenanda Road (1820). 'Public' courtyard showing cast iron ballustrading and fretwork. Photographed August 2000.

first floor is a hall in which there is wallpaper reputedly designed and imported from France. In the Daw house on Vivekenanda Road, the ironwork for the ballustrading to the house supposedly came from England (figure 6.9). The Sett family house was built partly in the early eighteenth century, but mostly in the nineteenth, with parts of the second floor added at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ In the Sett house, ionic columns decorate the exterior facades (figure 6.10), and ring the internal courtyard (figures 6.11, 6.12). Posta Rajbari reputedly 150 years old has an obvious baroque influence in the detailed ornamentation of its facades (figures 6.13, 6.14, 6.15). The Kundoo house, where the family have lived for 250 years, includes ionic columns on its main courtyard facades (figure 6.16), although its external facade is restrained (figure 6.17).

This changing architectural language echoed the changing social reality of Barabazaar at the time, and is typified by the *thakur dalans* with a courtyard required for displays of pomp and wealth at *puja* time, seen in several of the case study houses. The fusion of European and Indian culture is reflected in much of the architecture of the case study houses. In particular, the Sett family temple combined a neo-classical colonnade with more indigenous architectural elements found on the facade of the *thakur dalan* (figures 6.18 – 6.22). However, this mixing of cultural influences had its limits, as Choudhury argues, “It seems the traditional style was still preferred at this stage in temples meant purely for worship; but in *thakhur dalans* designed for ostentation and the entertaining of sahibs, the imported idiom was used.”⁴⁶ Despite courtyard houses being clothed in ‘modern’ European facades, they were still largely organised and planned along ‘traditional’ Indian lines. Nevertheless, with the establishment of the colonial era, this was beginning to change, and it is this arguably hybrid social ‘reality,’ reflected in the social organisation of the courtyard house, that is explained next.

⁴⁵ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, Kolkata, 1 August 2001

⁴⁶ Choudhury, ‘Trends in Calcutta Architecture,’ p.164, 165



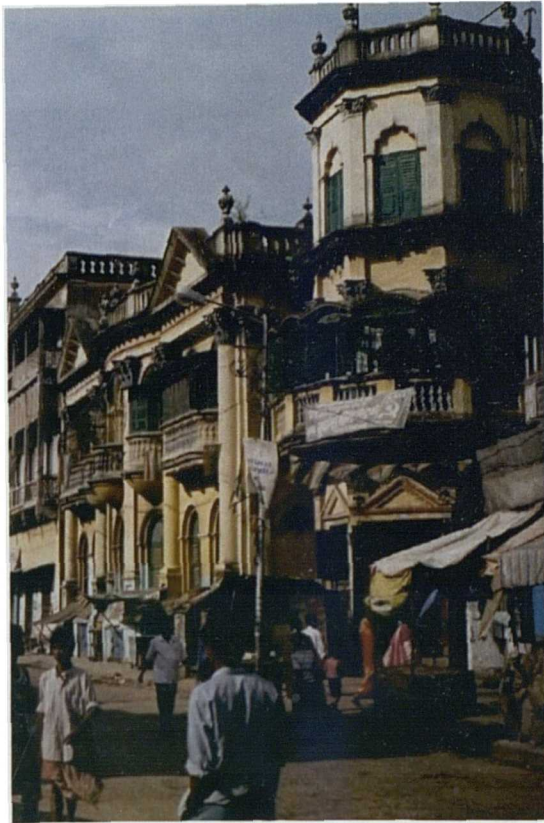
6.10. Sett house. View from the street. Photographed Easter 2003



6.11. Sett House. 'Public' courtyard. Photographed August 2001



6.12. Sett House. 'Public' courtyard. Photographed August 2001



6.13. Posta Rajbari. View from the street.
Photographed August 2000



6.14. Posta Rajbari. 'Public' courtyard.
Photographed Easter 2003



6.15. Posta Rajbari. 'Public' courtyard showing *thakur dalan*. Photographed Easter 2003



6.16. Kundoo house. 'Public' courtyard. Photographed Easter 2003



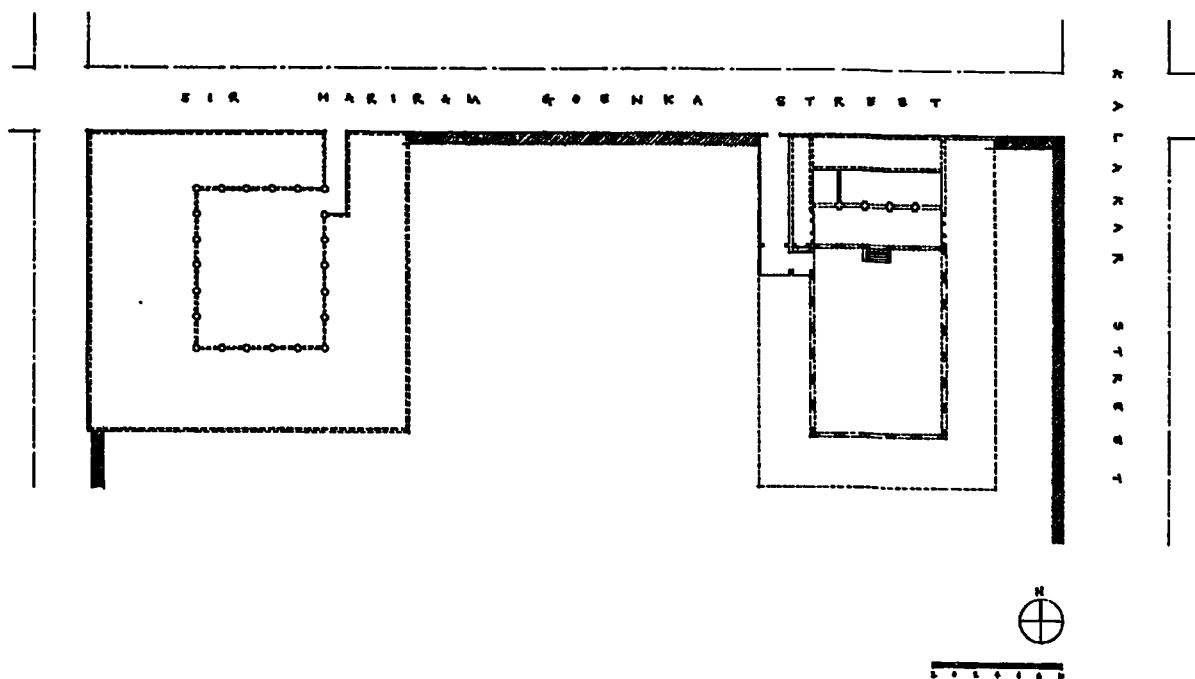
6.17. Kundoo house. View from the street. Photographed Easter 2003



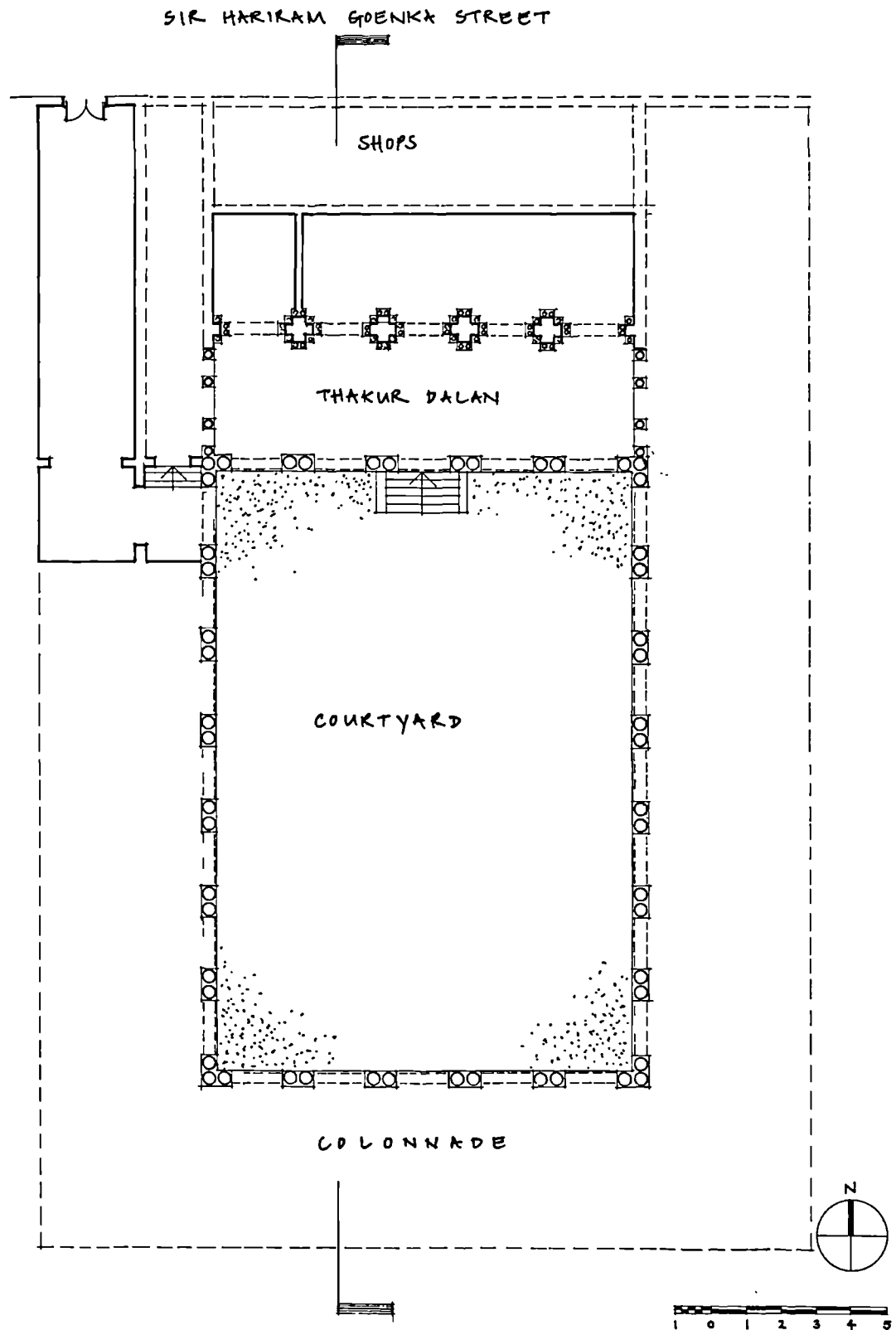
6.18. Sett House. Temple building looking towards main entrance. Photographed August 2001



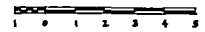
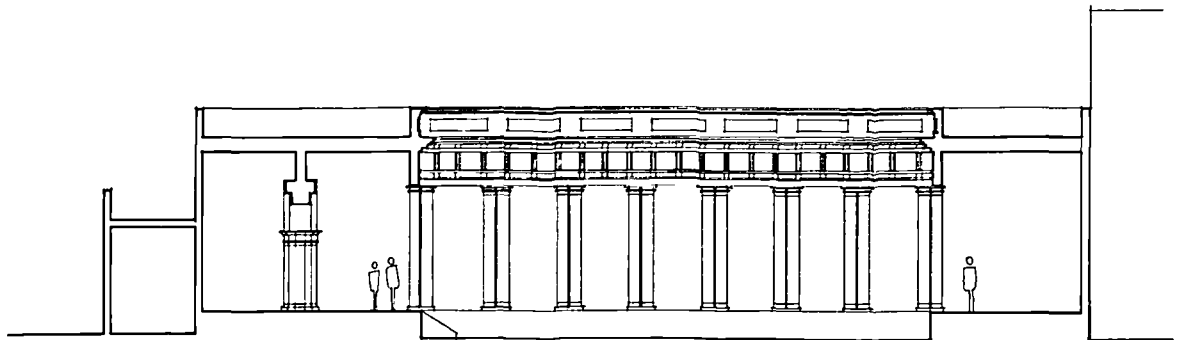
6.19. Sett House. Temple building *thakur dalan*. Photographed August 2001



6.20. Sett house and Temple. Location Plan. Surveyed August 2001



6.21. Sett Temple. Ground Floor Plan. Surveyed August 2001



6.22. Seti Temple. Section North-South. Surveyed August 2001

Social Organisation of the Courtyard House

According to Sunand Prasad, "it is likely that in North India prior to the colonial era any urban house, however humble, would be expected to have some kind of courtyard associated with it."⁴⁷ In Kolkata, Courtyard houses and their courtyards provided a unique mix of 'public' and 'private' space in the city. Naturally houses varied greatly in size, but the size of the courtyard was partially dependent on its 'public' and/or 'private' functions, forming an integral part of the network of the city's public spaces, that also included streets and markets. Swati Chattopadhyay points out that, "at a time when spanning large spaces could be very expensive, a large open courtyard with surrounding rooms accommodated various uses including large gatherings."⁴⁸ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not only were these spaces opened to the public to enable them to enjoy festivities hosted by the elite, but as Chattopadhyay acknowledges, outer rooms also functioned as offices, or *kachbari*, and were rented out or lent as a courtesy for meetings, theatre rehearsals, and classes.⁴⁹ The courtyard was also a ritual space for family marriage ceremonies, observances of death, confirmations, religious festivals, or *pujas*, and for discussions, or 'adda,' as well as a 'private' garden, or small piece of nature in the city.

Samarendra Daw summarised the uses of the courtyard in his house on Vivekenanda Road (figures 6.9, 6.23 – 6.30):

"The courtyards are being used . . . , not as a playground, but for the airy purpose, the sun rays and that will be there. Because the residents will be made as such a manner, there, no question of going out to take some air, to go to some outside purpose, we are not feeling well, but if it is being a wide courtyard, automatically the air from the southern side or from the northern side, it will come out. And every room have enough space, doors and

⁴⁷ Prasad, Sunand, *The Havelis of North India, The Urban Courtyard House*, PhD Thesis, The Royal College of Art, London, 1998, p. 3.2

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ According to Chattopadhyay, in *Depicting Calcutta*, before the development of the professional theatre in the late nineteenth century, public dramatic and musical performances were held in these courtyards and halls, p. 253



6.23. Daw House, Vivekenanda Road (1820). View from the street. Photographed August 2000.

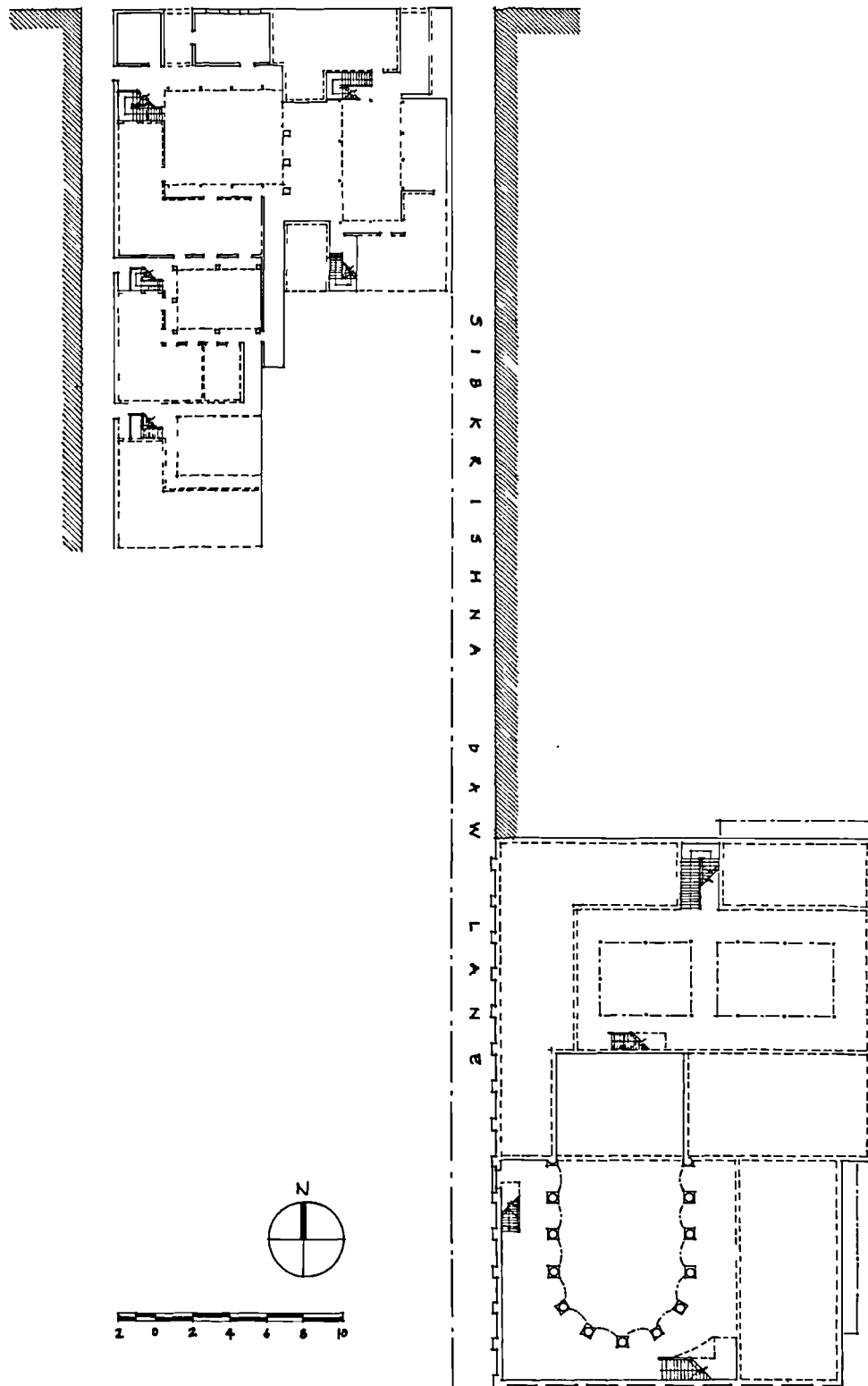


6.24. Daw House, Vivekenanda Road (1820). 'Public' courtyard. Photographed August 2000.

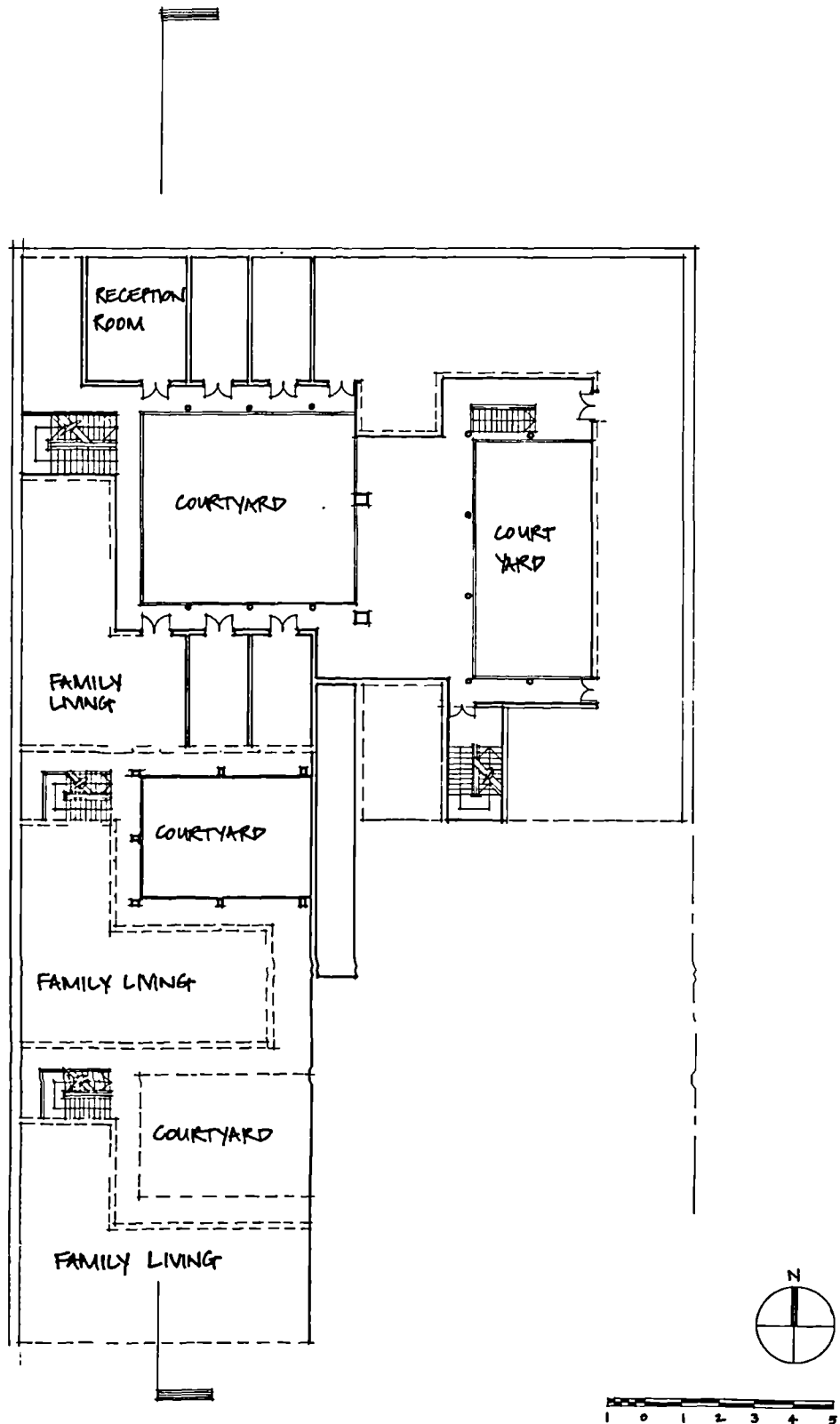


6.25. Daw House, Vivekenanda Road (1820). *Thakur dalan* with *Durga* idol under construction. Photographed August 2000.

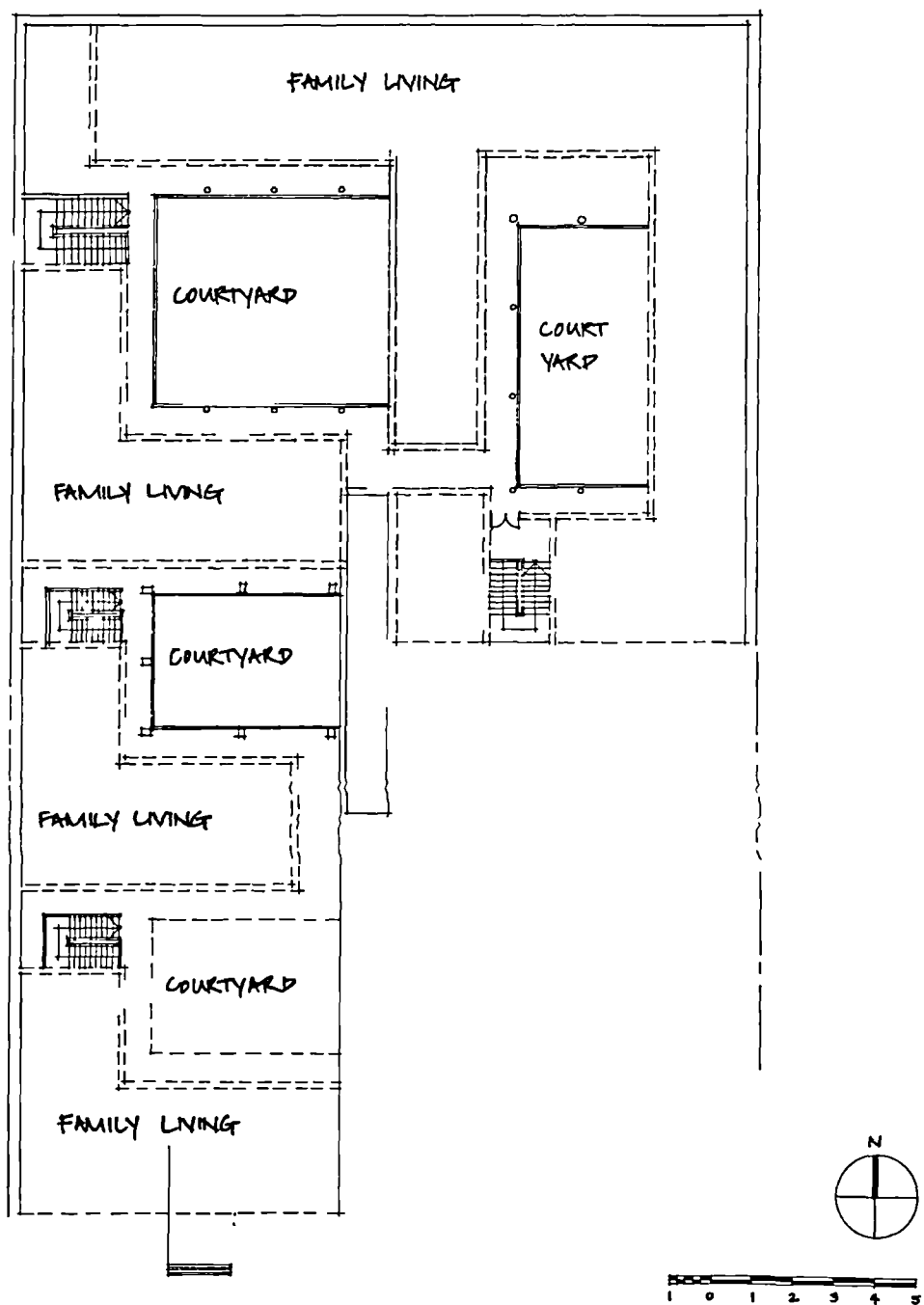
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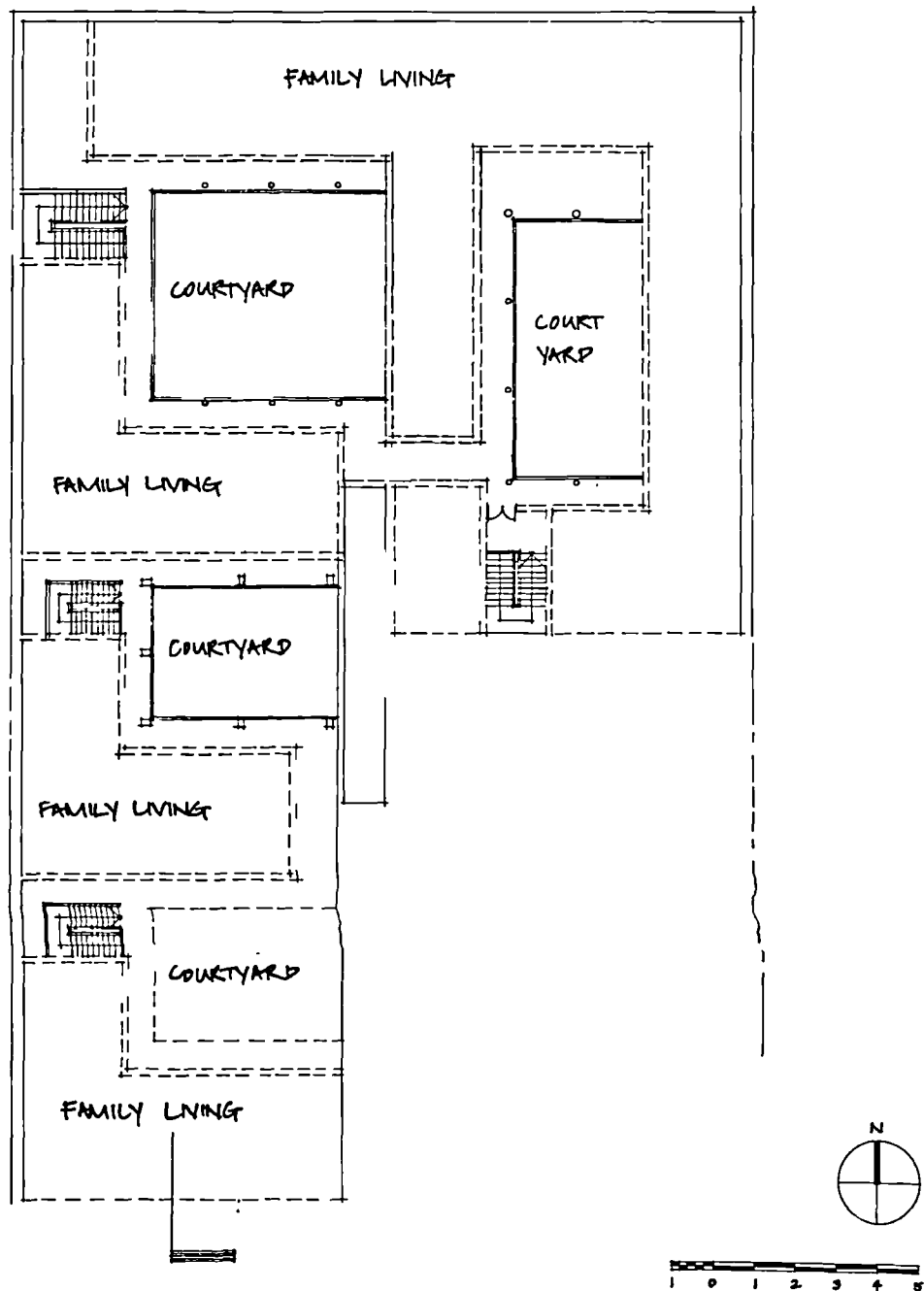
6.26. Daw Houses. Location Plan. Surveyed August 2000



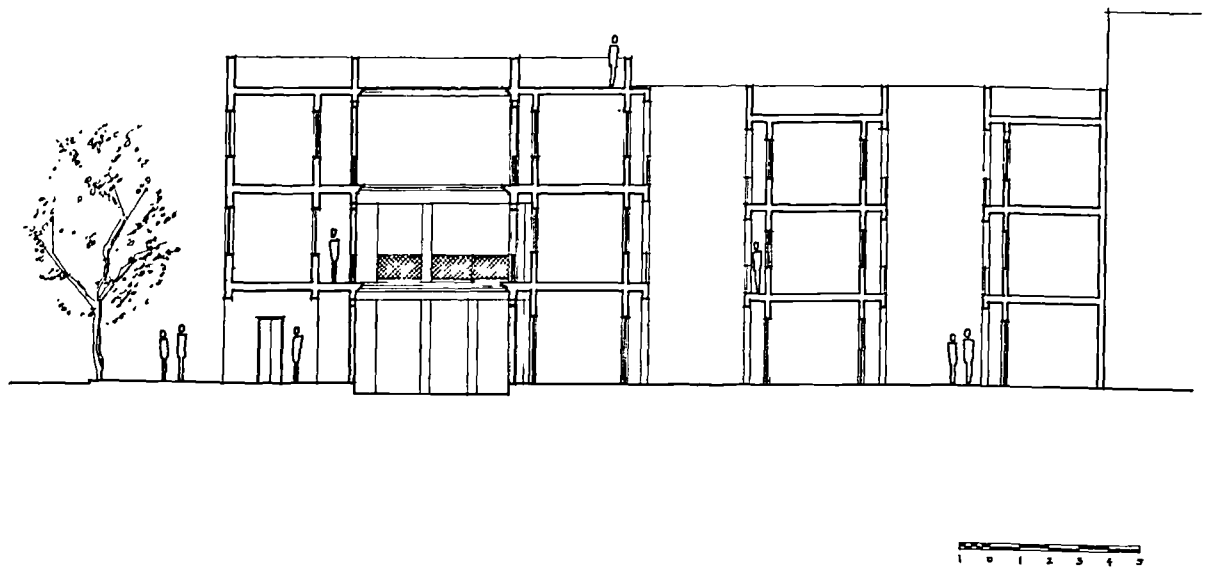
6.27. Daw House. Vivekenanda Road. Ground Floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



6.28. Daw House. Vivekenanda Road. First floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



6.29. Daw House. Vivekenanda Road. Second Floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



6.30. Daw House. Vivekenanda Road. Section North-South. Surveyed August 2000

windows of the courtyard belongs to them, that side and the backside, both sides. . . Courtyards are generally used, . . ., for the official purpose, that is the marriage occasion, and the *Durga Puja* ceremony, and other officials, say about some music conference, or any other conference for the courtyards are being used.”⁵⁰

During one interview, Prabhat Rohatgi mentioned that when he was a boy, the courtyard was often used as an overflow space; extended family members visiting for a day or two would sleep in it (figures 6.31 – 6.37).⁵¹

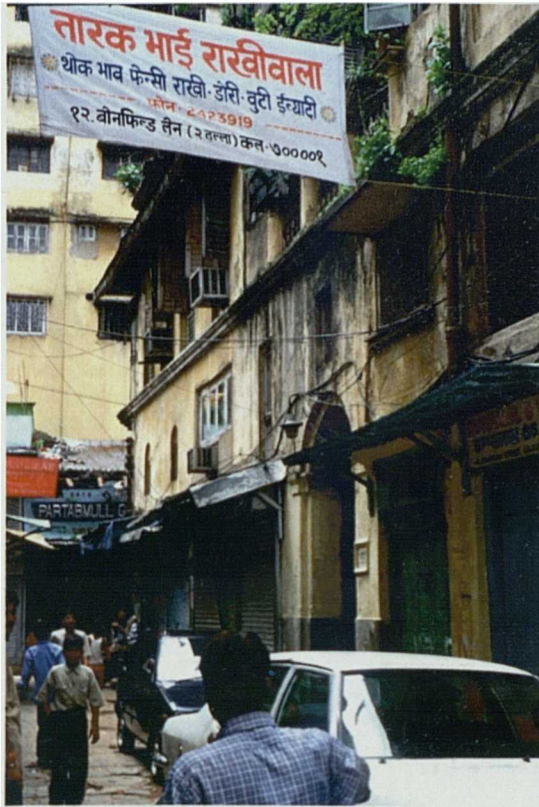
Courtyard houses were constructed so as to provide pleasant spaces for different seasons and times of day. The courtyard created an area of cool, shaded space at the centre of the house, and also increased the perimeter of the house, thereby facilitating better light and ventilation into the internal spaces of the house. In Kolkata, with its prevailing southerly winds, typically, living accommodation was located on the south side of the house. Rooms opened through verandas onto courtyards and terraces, allowing a movement of air through a range of different types of spaces. In some houses, screens and curtains, depending on the season and time of day, controlled the conditions of the rooms. Often, the only doors were onto storerooms, with additional security, “provided by trap-doors at the top of the stairs, by hidden cupboards and, more recently, by steel grilles fitted across smaller courtyards.”⁵² Nowadays in Barabazaar, there are steel grilles across entrances off the street, in most of the courtyard houses.

As well as climatic concerns, the courtyard also allowed more controlled interaction with the street. Through the doorway on the street there is often a passage or entrance hall, a *dehleez* or *deodhi*, that leads, sometimes via an offset to a courtyard. In the more affluent houses of Barabazaar, with multiple courtyards, this would be the ‘public’ courtyard and another passage would lead to the ‘private’ family courtyard(s) at the rear of the house. The Daw

⁵⁰ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 23 July 2001

⁵¹ Prabhat Rohatgi, interview with the author, Kolkata, 30 July 2000

⁵² Tillotson, Sarah, *Indian Mansions. A Social History of the Haveli*, The Oleander Press, Cambridge and New York, 1994, p. 15



6.31. Rohatgi house. View from the street.
Photographed August 2000.



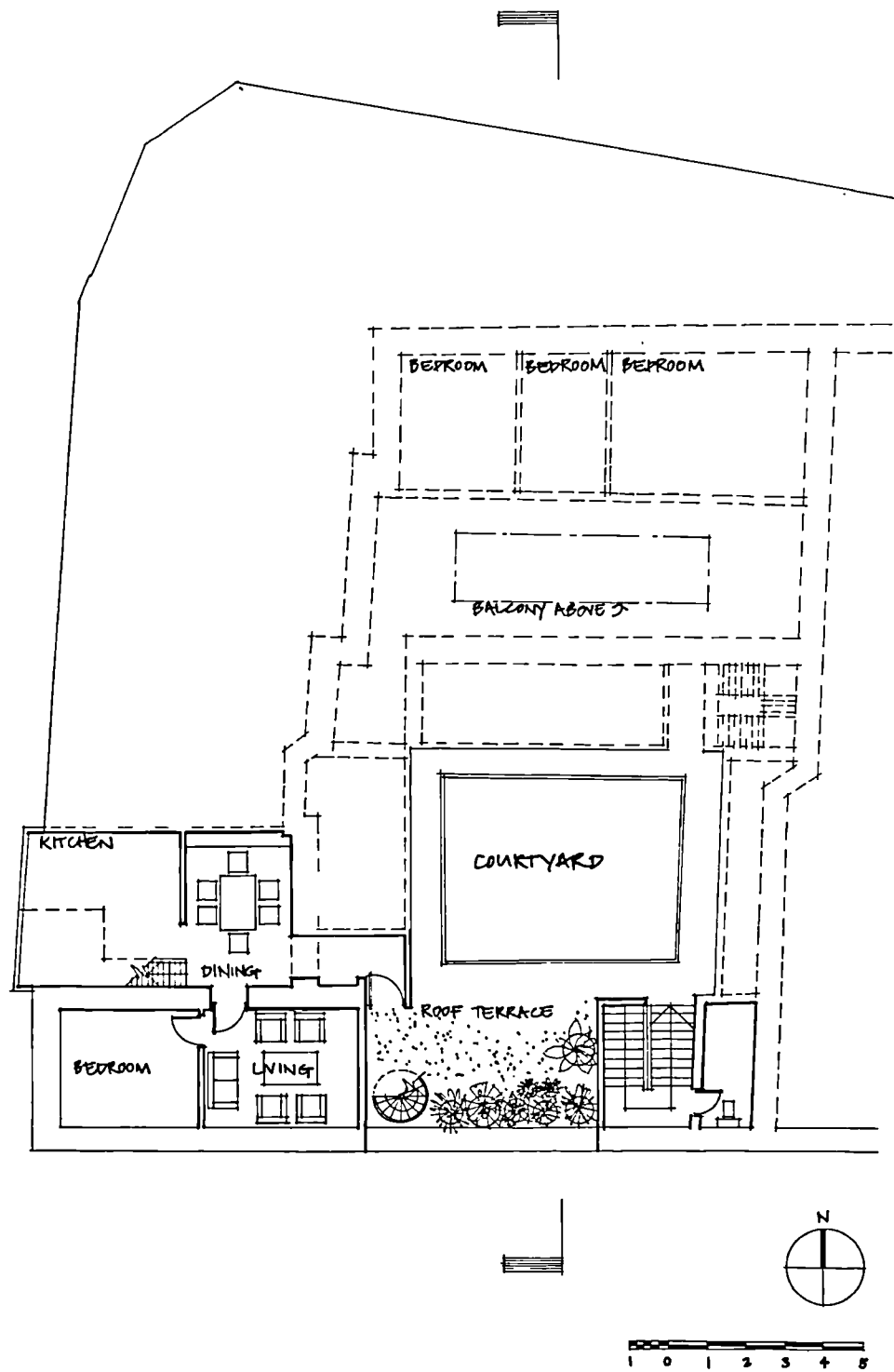
6.32. Rohatgi house. 'Public' courtyard.
Photographed August 2000.



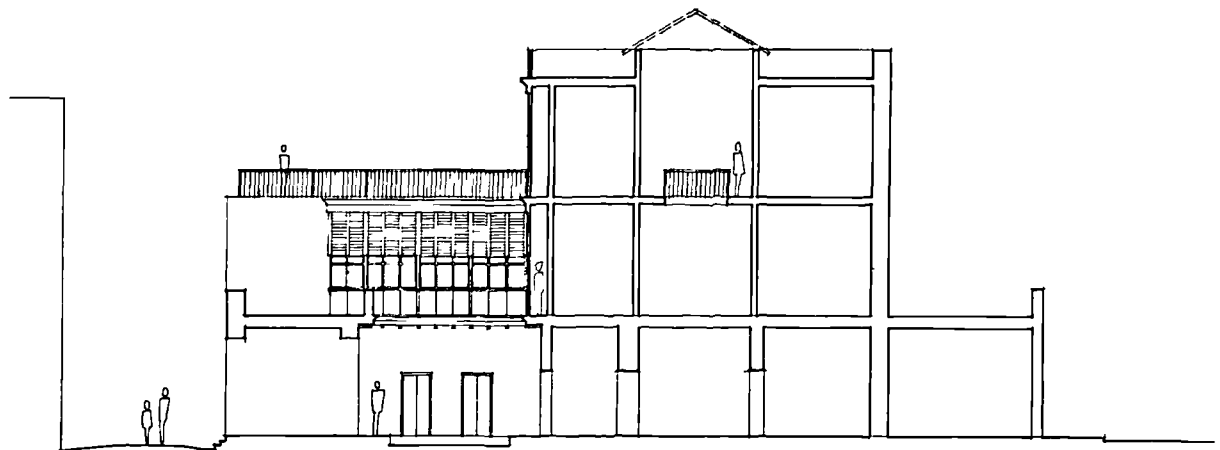
6.33. Rohatgi house. 'Public' courtyard.
Photographed August 2000.



6.34. Rohatgi house. View from roof terrace.
Photographed August 2000.



6.36. Rohatgi House. First Floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



1 0 1 2 3 4 5

6.37. Rohatgi House. Section North-South. Surveyed August 2000

house, on Vivekenanda Road, was built in about 1820, around a front public courtyard, and a number of separate more utilitarian family courtyards, constructed later as the family expanded. According to Prasad, “this arrangement is only occasionally found in the Hindu [courtyard houses] and then only in those of the wealthiest.”⁵³ The Daw house on Sibkrishna Daw Lane also follows this ‘model’ courtyard house typology, with a ‘public’ courtyard, and ‘private’ family court at the back.

However, more often than not, in Barabazaar, with its restriction on space, and more compact houses, the *deodhi* leads straight onto the only courtyard.⁵⁴ In Barabazaar, where houses are usually on more than one storey, the ground floor is associated with work and business and is a predominantly male domain. Galleries run around the courtyard on upper levels opening to family rooms. Servants and domestic helpers may occupy a separate courtyard or live on the ground floor of the main building. On top of the house is the roof terrace, which may have some potted plants on it. It may also be used for taking the sun in the winter, drying food and clothes and flying kites and pigeons, as well as sleeping in the summer.

Typically, the open courtyard is surrounded by a semi-enclosed veranda, beyond which was built a single row of rooms, arranged in a variety of layouts. The most formal in Barabazaar contain the pavilion for the deity, or *thakur dalan*, on the north or east side of the courtyard. There might also be a range of public rooms such as the hall, or *baithak-khana*, the dance room, or *nach ghar*, offices, and sometimes even a library. In the more affluent houses, as Prasad states, “one may find the grandest room on the first floor above the entrance – another *dalaan* or *mahal* – which will give onto the balcony above the front door.”⁵⁵ The main formal guest room in the Daw house on Vivekenanda Road, is over the main entrance. Although I never saw it, Mr. Daw also mentioned there was a dance room on the second floor of the house on Sibkrishna Daw Lane. Other rooms are used for kitchens, food and water stores, and bathrooms. Room use was not fixed except in spaces like kitchens, bathrooms,

⁵³ Prasad, *The Havelis of North India*, p. 3.11

⁵⁴ Of the words for courtyard *angan* (Hindi) simply means yard. It need not be enclosed on all sides and it is generally but not essentially square. *Chowk* (Hindi) contains the idea of four sides within it as well as enclosure, it is also used for ‘a spacious crossing inside a city with imposing buildings on all sides’. *Sehen* (Urdu) is specifically the courtyard in a building.

⁵⁵ Prasad, *The Havelis of North India*, p. 3.2

and WCs, in formal area like receptions, and in religious spaces like shrine, or *puja* rooms. Room functions varied according to the seasons, and the temperature of the room at particular times of day. According to Prasad, “there was no conception until the late colonial period of ‘bedrooms’ or ‘dining rooms’ or ‘sitting rooms’.”⁵⁶

Durga Puja

Significantly affecting the design of courtyard houses in Barabazaar, was the ‘tradition’ of celebrating *Durga Puja* with Europeans, started by Nabakrishna Deb in 1757 (described in the previous section). Observed by most people who live in Kolkata, *Durga Puja* is peculiar to Eastern India but celebrated in different forms elsewhere, commemorating the, “universal resurgence of the power of creation and destruction”.⁵⁷ According to Chaliha and Gupta,

“The story goes that Mahishasur, the buffalo demon, ravaged the earth and was invincible. The gods, in dismay, combined their powers to create a beautiful sixteen-year-old maiden, and each placed his or her most potent weapon in one of her ten hands. Her return each year in the Bengali month of Ashwin (September- October) commemorates Rama’s invocation of the goddess Durga before he went into battle with Ravana.”⁵⁸

Traditionally, the celebrations begin in the ‘public’ courtyards of the houses, where a straw and clay idol of *Durga* is constructed in the *thakur dalan*. At the time of the *puja*, the idol is processed through the city streets to the River Hooghly for immersion. Thousands offer prayers to their ancestors at the river *ghats*. The two Daw houses (figures 6.25, 6.38), as well as Posta Rajbari (figure 6.15), and the Kundoo house (figure 6.39), all have courtyards with *thakur dalans*, which are dedicated to *Durga*, following the ‘tradition’ of family *puja* first set by Nabakrishna Deb. Posta Rajbari has an additional temple building to the rear (figure 6.40).

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 3.7

⁵⁷ Chaliha, Jaya, and Gupta, Bunny, ‘Durga Puja in Calcutta,’ in, *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 331-336, p. 331

⁵⁸ *ibid.*



6.38. Daw House, Sibkrishna Daw Lane. *Thakur dalan* with *Durga* idol under construction. Photographed August 2000.



6.39. Kundoo house. 'Public' courtyard showing *thakur dalan*. Photographed Easter 2003



6.40. Posta Rajbari. View of temple building from main entrance on Garden Street.
Photographed Easter 2003

However, not everybody celebrates or follows *Durga*. The Sett family follow Krishna, and have their own Temple, or *thakur bari*, dedicated to Krishna. It was built by Jadabendu Sett in 1729, on the same city block as their own house, and once linked directly to it (figures 6.18 - 6.22). Ashim Sett described some of the differences:

“Yes, yes, in fact, we used to have a *puja* room, where we used to have small idols of, idols of Lord Krishna, because we are mainly followers of Krishna. So we used to have those small idols and my mother and father, in fact, I do not do it myself. But every ladies member used to do some prayer over there. In fact, we do not have any, like other, other, Mallick families or Law families, Law families they use the *Durga Puja*. We do not have those types of *pujas*, . . .and since we have got a separate temple house, and we used to have festivals for that, you know *Jamwustomi* (?) is coming, this *julam* (?) is now going. These are the festivals of Krishna. So that is being followed in our temple house. . . So that we do not have, have any, any *puja* festival in the house itself.”⁵⁹

Vastu Shastra

In addition to religious concerns, all of the houses are, to some extent, planned around the principles of *Vastu Shastra*. As well as fulfilling the immediate physical needs that any house had to satisfy, a courtyard house, particularly for a Hindu family, “had to ensure good fortune for its builder and occupants.”⁶⁰ It did this by its layout and geometry, enshrined in the ancient Indian treatises on *Vastu Shastra*. *Vastu* offered a multi-disciplinary approach to design, and amongst other things provided a framework for the correct orientation of the house, advice on proportioning systems, proper cross-ventilation, and the determination of auspicious days for starting the work. According to B. B. Puri, “the shastras incorporated the course of the sun,

⁵⁹ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, Kolkata, 1 August 2001

⁶⁰ Chakrabarti, Vibhuti, *Indian Architectural Theory Contemporary Uses of Vastu Vidya*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, p. 10

the moon and the planets,” in other words, “the mathematical and physical science of astrology.”⁶¹ The date of its emergence as a specialised science dealing with architecture is thought to be around the 1st century A. D.⁶²

At the heart of the treatises are diagrams, or *mandalas*, finite grids in which each cell – *griha*, literally ‘house’ – is presided over by a ruling principle (a ‘deity’, or divinity) with *Brahma* always at the centre. The mandala seeks to represent the sacred cosmos, the essence of all things. Since they are almost invariably orthogonal it is easy to relate plans of courtyard houses to one or other *mandala*, and when translated into plans the various principles become associated with particular parts of the building. However, as Prasad comments, “this does not necessarily demonstrate the genesis of the plan since there are several other reasons for the gridded geometry, like constructional exigencies – especially the span limitations of timber and stone – and convenient arrangements . . . the process would seem to begin with an assessment of the general needs of the household and the site conditions.”⁶³ It is also worth mentioning that each house design depends on the availability of land, surrounding street pattern, and the local architectural fashion.

The *Vastu Purusha Mandala* is regarded as “the perfect figure”⁶⁴ the master grid for the design and is superimposed on to the site with the help of cord and pegs to establish orientation, planning and the form of the house (figure 6.41). The treatises record that it is forbidden to construct anything in the *griha* of *Brahma*. As Prasad comments, “in the ancient *mandalas* the central square, that of the courtyard, belongs to Brahma who is the Creator; only bare earth and plants were traditionally allowed here.”⁶⁵ Crucially this correlates directly with the essential courtyard house plan. Various associations are given to the eight cardinal directions, which help elucidate the orientational principles of *Vastu Shastra*. The basic grid locates the *puja* room on the north east corner, at the head of Brahma, the kitchen in the

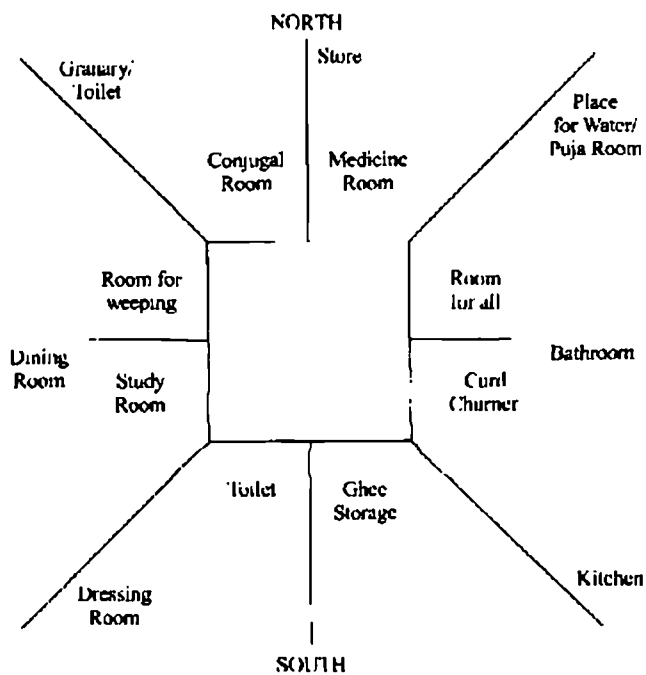
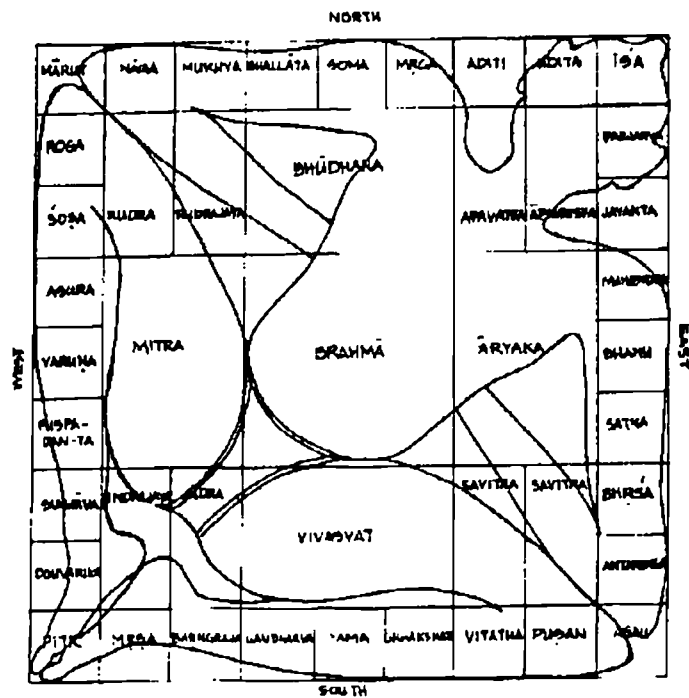
⁶¹ Puri, B. B., *Applied Vastu Shastra in Modern Architecture*, Vastu Gyan Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 45

⁶² For a more detailed explanation refer to: Vibhuti Chakrabarti, *Indian Architectural Theory Contemporary Uses of Vastu Vidya*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999

⁶³ Prasad, *The Havelis of North India*, p. 3.20

⁶⁴ Puri, *Applied Vastu Shastra in Modern Architecture*, p. 70

⁶⁵ Prasad, *The Havelis of North India*, p. 3.3



6.41. Vastu Purusha Mandala

Chakrabarty, Vibhuti, *Indian Architectural Theory Contemporary Uses of Vastu Vidya*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, p. 7

south-east corner, the master bedroom in the south-west corner. The living spaces, other bedrooms and also the dining room are situated towards the south-west side of the house, also taking advantage of prevailing winds in summer and warm sun in the winter.

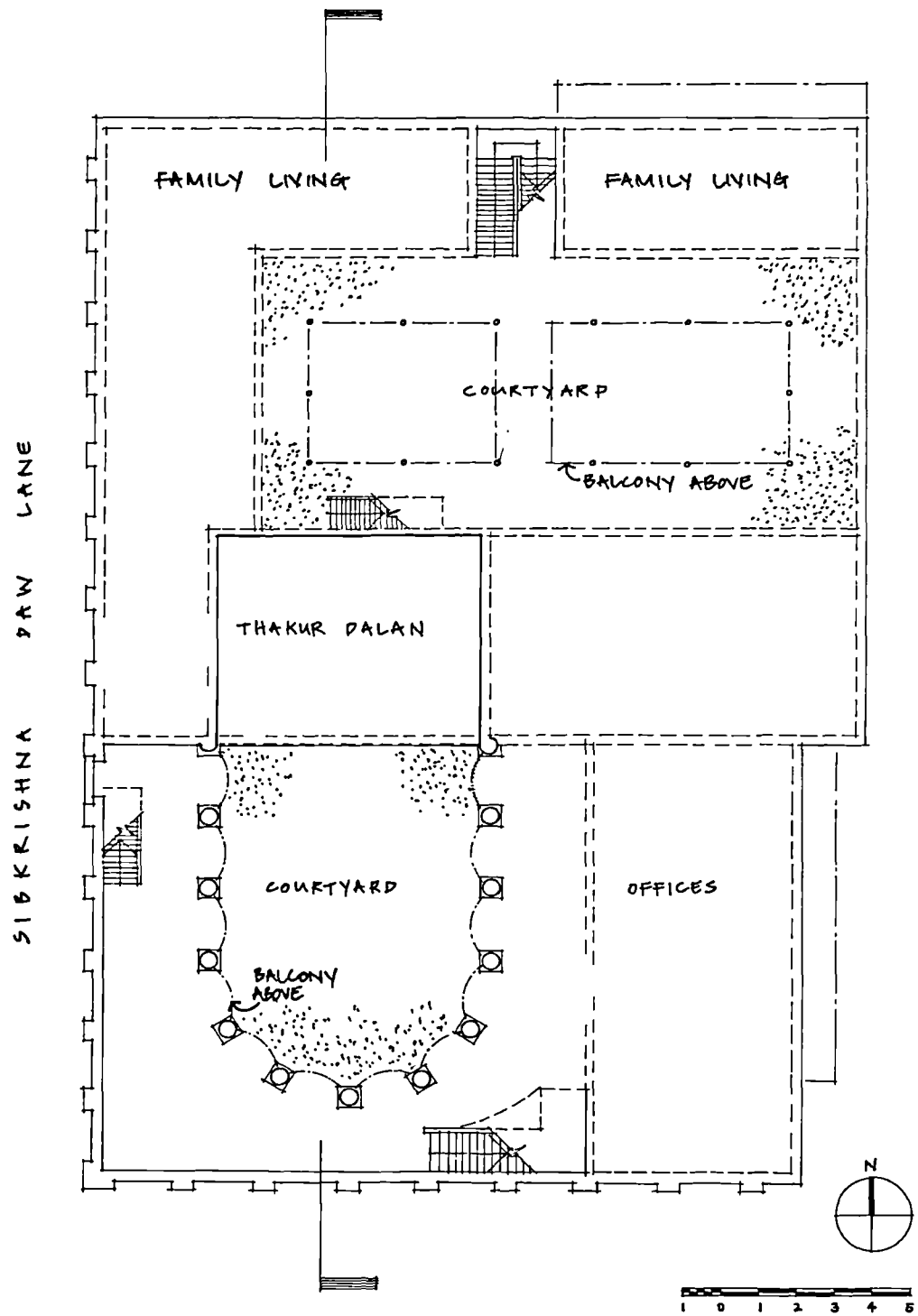
Where one sees the closest links to the principles of *Vastu* in the case study houses are, as one might expect, in the location of the *puja* rooms, all of which are on the north or east sides of the houses. The *puja* room for the Daw house, on Vivekenanda Road is on the ground floor, east side, for the house on Sibkrishna Daw lane it is on the ground floor of the *Durga Puja* courtyard, north side (figures 6.27, 6.42). The *puja* room for the Sett family temple is on the ground floor, north side (figure 6.21). The *puja* room for the Kundoo house is on the east side (figure 6.39). The *puja* room for the Rohatgi house is on the top floor, although its exact position is unknown. Ashim Sett described another consideration for the ideal location for this room in the house:

“Usually it should be in the top floor and we have a *puja* room, in fact in the top floor. In fact, over *puja* room there should not be any room for living. That is the concept, because in that case you are moving over the head of God.”⁶⁶

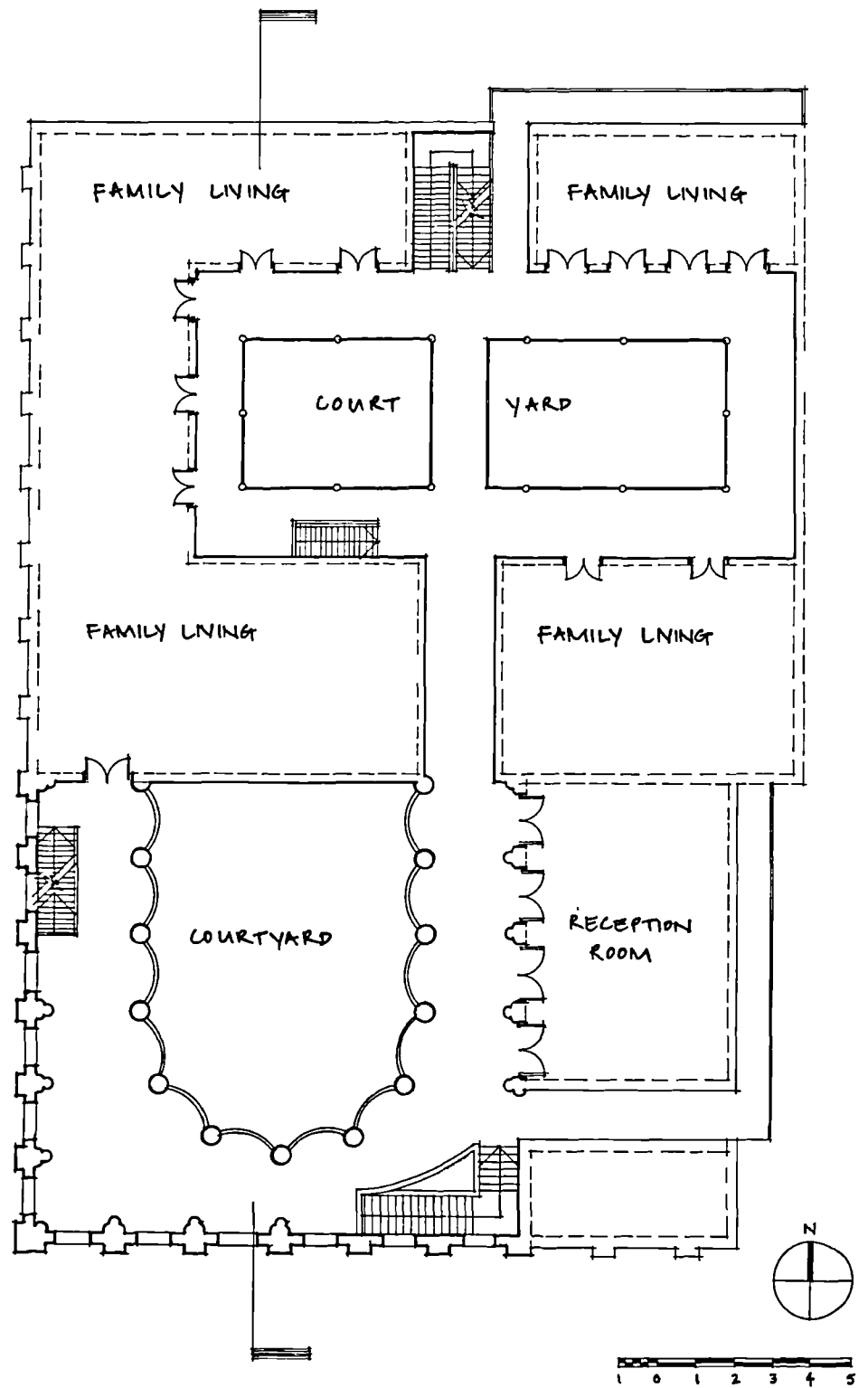
The principles of *Vastu* begin to break down in the case study houses when it comes to the location of other rooms. The family living rooms and bedrooms in the Rohatgi house are predominantly on the south side (figure 6.36). The living rooms and bedrooms for the Daw house on Vivekenanda road are grouped around courtyards on the south side of the complex (figures 6.27 - 6.29). The living rooms and bedrooms for the Kundoo house are on the south and west side of the house. However, against the principles of *Vastu*, the family living and bedrooms for the house on Sibkrishna Daw Lane are around a courtyard on the north side of the house (figures 6.42 - 6.45).

Clearly the design and organisation of courtyard houses was affected by a mix of pragmatic, religious, societal and climatic factors, as well as the principles of *Vastu Shastra*. In addition

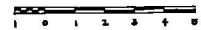
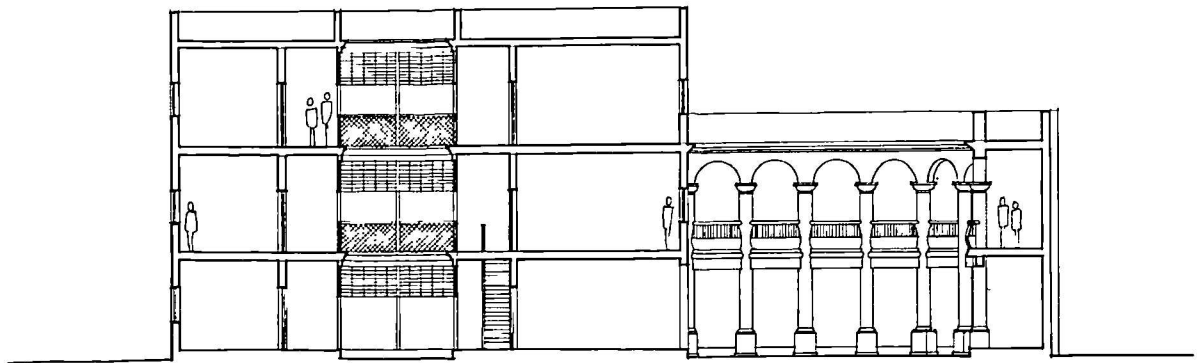
⁶⁶ *ibid.*



6.42. Daw House. Sibkrishna Daw Lane. Ground floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



6.43. Daw House. Sibkrishna Daw Lane. First Floor Plan. Surveyed August 2000



6.44. Daw House. Sibkrishna Daw Lane. Section North-South. Surveyed August 2000



6.45. Daw House, Sibkrishna Daw Lane. 'Private' courtyard. Photographed August 2000.

to the 'hybrid' architectural styles described in the previous section, this mix echoed the 'hybrid' social organisation of the house, that incorporated both indigenous elements like *Vastu*, with more European colonial influences absorbed through the 'tradition' of *Durga Puja*. Underlying these mixed external 'signs' was a 'hybrid' attitude to 'modernising' the 'traditional,' taken up by the educated Bengali *bhadralok*, during the nineteenth century, which paralleled the familiar modernising mission of health and hygiene, proselytised by the colonial establishment (explained in chapter 4). At this point, it is important to highlight the multiple and often competing 'representations,' under which the relationship between 'private' and 'public' life have been organised in the Bengali home in the past. It is the distinction between 'private' living, and 'public' work space that is explored more fully through the present-day case study houses.

'Private' Living Space

Courtyard houses were built to accommodate an extended family, the people who served them, their possessions, and their means of livelihood. When conditions became too crowded, uncles and male cousins moved to set up their own homes, but never far away. Typical of this, are the two Daw Houses, whose entrances are about 200 metres apart and share a common boundary, Sibkrishna Daw Lane (named after their great-great grandfather). According to Prasad, "the family would typically number 20-30 people but might be as few as four or five people or as many as a hundred."⁶⁷ The families surveyed vary greatly in size. Mr. Rohatgi lives only with his wife, Shashi, and sister-in law. Mr. Sett lives with his mother and father, his wife, two children and with one of his brothers and his family. Mr. Samarendra Daw has two other sisters (both dead) and two other brothers (one 81 years old) who live at the house on Vivekenanda Road. According to Mr. Daw, there are about 65 of his relatives living in the house at Vivekenanda Road. Mr. Daw said the house on Vivekenanda Road had 250 rooms.⁶⁸ Three brothers and their families share the Kundoo house on Tarak Pramanik Road.

⁶⁷ Prasad, *The Havelis of North India*, p. 3.7

⁶⁸ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 17 August 2000

All families live as extended families in different ways, but one of the key factors differentiating how families live together are their cooking arrangements. Some extended families share a single kitchen serving all the units of the family. Other extended families live more separately with separate kitchens for individual family units. Mr. Sett explains:

"But there are a lot of families they are living jointly, having separate kitchens and all these things. But they are living jointly in single premises, having their own part and all these things."⁶⁹

The Rohatgi family is the smallest and most fragmented of those studied. Prabhat and Shashi have one son who has settled in Delhi and one daughter living in New York. The recent history of the family may illustrate how the size of the extended family appears to be shrinking. Prabhat is one of eleven children. Now, his brothers (5 or 6) and sisters (5 or 6) are scattered all over India and have much smaller families, no more than two children and some with none. One of his brothers lives in Bombay, a retired international partner of the accountancy firm, Arthur Andersen.

The Sett family live fully as an extended family, and according to Mr. Ashim Sett, "we are living, staying, eating jointly." Ashim was keen to stress what he saw as the positive sides of the extended family. He pointed out that his business activities meant that, "we can really spend little time for our families." For Ashim one of the advantages of the extended family was stated as follows: "well there is someone to talk about, my wife can talk to someone, it's not that she's alone." He also pointed out some of the tensions: "because you know, two ladies in a kitchen is a hell of a lot, and all the things starts from there."⁷⁰

All of the houses surveyed employed servants or domestic helpers. The Rohatgi family employed at least two people. Mr. Ashim Sett employed three people. The Daw family employed four people, who all lived in the house. In a conversation with Mr. Daw, he said that servants were becoming harder to find, as they could now earn more money working in

⁶⁹ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, Kolkata, 1 August 2001

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

factories.⁷¹ The conversation seemed to point to the fact that the number of servants employed by these families was decreasing, and made sense with decreasing family sizes. However, the evidence was inconclusive, with contradictory statements from different people. Mr. Daw, stated, “no, no, the number is not going to be decreased, but the number is stationary.”⁷² Mr. Sett, thought that, “if you counted for the whole family it is same, but in our part it becomes three.” He also went on to say, “you know, younger days, when all of our fathers and uncles have been living in the same house, we have got lot of servants and all these things.”⁷³

It is important to emphasise that all of the families surveyed have different attitudes to the idea of the extended family, and that views often vary from different generations within each family as well. Arguably reflecting the changing social ‘reality’ of Barabazaar today, such differences, particularly between older and younger generations are to a certain extent ‘negotiated’ as both generations share the same courtyard house environment. In some respects, the idea of the extended family can be seen to encourage the status quo. Such hybrid attitudes to the idea of extended family, amongst families surveyed, is reflected in competing attitudes to both ‘private’ and ‘public’ space found in the case study houses.

‘Public’ Work Space

In Barabazaar, with its pressure for space, typically the whole of the ground floor would be devoted to the joint family business. As a result, many visitors came on business, and the courtyard house often contained, beside the grand reception rooms used for both business and family occasions, other rooms for use solely as business offices. For all three families, there seemed little separation between business and family activities, with the former spreading through most of the whole day. As Mr. Sett comments:

⁷¹ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 19 August 2000. Mr. Daw also told me that servants can be employed for RS 100 - 200 per month.

⁷² Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 23 July 2001

⁷³ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, Kolkata, 1 August 2001

"Look, people like me who are . . . having some business, they do not have any time like this. It starts work from 8 o'clock in the morning and ends. It goes till 10 o'clock some days, 7 o'clock some days, some days we get off at 5 o'clock and go to club and have some drink, and go back to home. So that way activities are all business activities."⁷⁴

Mr. Daw's routine seemed more regular:

"Actually, we have a time for this, say about 6.30. And there we have to walk out and then say after about 10.30, the breakfast going on 8.00, 8.00 am. Then after that breakfast we have 10.30 or 10.00, 10.00 to 10.30 we have a (?). After that we come out for the office, then in the office to finish at 9.00. Say at 9.30 to 10.00 we have our dinner [at the house]. So this is our habituation, the system of our day."⁷⁵

Whilst all the families surveyed originally situated themselves in Barabazaar because of their business dealings there, all of them now work largely outside Barabazaar. The Rohatgi family came to Kolkata from Patna, Bihar, where they were landlords or, *zamindars*. (The family still own their ancestral family house in Patna, Bihar.) In Kolkata, they were employed by the East India Company as brokers, or *Banyans*, liaising on the Company's behalf with local Indian traders and manufacturers. They set up business, exporting printed muslin to England, and diversified into banking, lending money to amongst others, East India Company officers. Today, the house still has vaults in it. More recently, Prabhat Rohatgi's father opened a factory making the first light bulbs and fluorescent tubes in India. They employed about 4000 people in various factories, but when the present Communist Government of West Bengal came to power in 1967, a lot of these factories were taken over.⁷⁶ Nowadays, Mr Rohatgi is the Director of Pradip Lamp Works, the family firm making light bulbs, but with a much reduced work force.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 23 July 2001

⁷⁶ Prabhat Rohatgi, interview with the author, Kolkata, 30 July 2000

The Rohatgi family also own 44, Armenian Street, which is a tenanted courtyard building. The family used to own a property adjacent to the Armenian Church, but when Brabourne Road was constructed in the 1940's, the house was demolished and they received land with shops as compensation. They own two houses on Rabindra Sarani, that are apparently very run down.

Mr. Daw's great-great grandfather came from a village in Bengal to Kolkata. His great grandfather built the house on Vivekenanda Road so he could be close to what he called, "significant dignitaries."⁷⁷ The family firm, established by his great grandfather in 1835, now deals in antique weapons (guns and swords) and modern sporting guns for hunting and clay pigeon shooting. The Daw family has owned a gun shop on the east side of BBD Bagh in central Kolkata for 100 years. They have shops all over Eastern India, including another one in Kolkata, on Chowringee, one in Burdwan, West Bengal, and one in Cuttack, Orissa. They sell mostly to private clients, but also some small orders to the government (10-15 guns at a time). The entire family worked in the same business, as Mr. Daw so emphatically put it,

"Same type jobs, ammunition trade. Nobody is going to give the service to the other people, government employment, nothing. Their trading is arms and ammunition for time immemorial."⁷⁸

The Daw family also own some rented property in and around Kolkata, and maintain an office for tenants at the house on Vivekenanda Road, which opens daily from 10.00 - 12.00 a.m.

The Sett family have lived in Kolkata since the 1660's.⁷⁹ According to Chitra Deb, "before the British came, the most powerful families of the Calcutta region were the Sheths and Basaks, the merchants of the yarn and cloth market at Sutanuti."⁸⁰ In the late seventeenth Century,

⁷⁷ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 19 August 2000

⁷⁸ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 23 July 2001

⁷⁹ The Sett family name, like many family names has had various spellings over the generations, being referred to by different writers as Sheth, and Seth

⁸⁰ Deb, 'The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta,' p. 56

Janardan Sheth was employed by the East India Company as a *banyan*. J. P. Losty claimed that:

“The court in London consistently complained about the Seths, whom they imagined were cheating their Calcutta servants and themselves, and demanded that they be replaced by more subservient brokers and that the President should take more of the commissioning work into his own hands. To please their masters, the council dispensed with the Seths for a while, but in the end had to reinstate them as no other broker could deliver satisfactorily.”⁸¹

According to J. P. Losty, the Seths owned a garden on the Chitpore road, “along which they had planted trees, . . . noted as Zura Bari Bag”⁸² (refer to, Theodore Forresti and John Ollifres, *Plan of Calcutta, 1742*, figure 1.10). During the eighteenth Century, the Seth’s with Omi Chand were bankers lending money for the Maratha ditch,⁸³ and to Mir Jafir, the Nawab of Bengal. According to Chitra Deb, “the Sheths and Basaks began to decline from the mid-eighteenth century - just as Calcutta began to grow into a substantial city.”⁸⁴

According to Mr. Ashim Sett, his father’s generation was no longer in business: “in fact, my father had three brothers, one of them was an attorney, and my father and my next uncle, they are both doctors, so they had their profession.”⁸⁵ Nowadays, Mr. Sett is a director of a firm of building contractors that also employs architects, engineers and planners, which he started himself and now runs from offices in South Kolkata. All his brothers are in different types of work; one is an eye surgeon, the other an accountant with a firm in London. There is also a joint family transportation business, which is run from the house in Barabazaar.

⁸¹ Losty, J. P., *Calcutta City of Palaces, A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company 1690-1858*, The British Library Board, London, p. 19

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 23

⁸³ According to J. P. Losty, in, *Calcutta City of Palaces*, “the Consultations for 31 March 1743 record that the Bengali inhabitants of Calcutta had proposed to dig at their own expense a ditch round the whole of the town from the river north of Suttanuttee down to the battery at the Lall Bazaar, and wanted a loan of 25, 000 rupees to begin the work, three of the Seths and Omi Chand engaging to repay the sum in three months.” p. 24

⁸⁴ Deb, Chitra, ‘The ‘Great Houses’ of Old Calcutta,’ p. 56

⁸⁵ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, 1 August 2001

The Kundoo family come to Kolkata from Saptogram 250 years ago to start a brass and copper business. They related a story of how the family business used to copper-bottom ships for the British.⁸⁶ Now the brass and copper business had largely gone with the onset of aluminium and stainless steel. Although they still live as an extended family, they have another house down the road that has been divided up between family units.

Again it is important to emphasise that all of the families surveyed have different attitudes to the idea of the joint family business, and that views often vary between different generations within each family as well. Arguably reflecting the changing social reality of Barabazaar today, just as attitudes to joint families are changing, so are family attitudes to the joint family business. On one occasion, and after some prodding, the conservative Mr. Daw seemed to suggest that those in the family, who were getting an education were going off to do their own thing.⁸⁷ Trader A, a Barabazaar paper trader, asked why you would want to sell pots and pans all your life, if you had a University degree. Such hybrid attitudes to the idea of the joint family business, amongst families surveyed, is reflected in competing attitudes to both 'public' and 'private' space found in the case study houses.

Conclusions: Reflections on Changing 'Public' and 'Private' Lives

The mid-nineteenth century saw several allied developments in nineteenth century Bengali culture. Firstly, the extravagant side of the Bengali elite came to be pilloried by Bengali thinkers as never before. Referring to the *banians* and merchants, Bhabanicharan Banerji in *Kalikata Kamalalay* (1823) wrote, "they are not truly great men," adding, "they have simply grown rich by canvassing, commissioning, cheating and pimping."⁸⁸ Kaliprasanna Sinha was even more penetrating in *Hutom Penchar Naksha* (1862). As the influence of the Bengali Nawabs declined and that of British colonialism rose, he wrote, "the great bamboo groves were chopped down and little twigs began to fill with pith. Clerks, grocers and oilmen became

⁸⁶ Kundoo family, interview with the author, 11 April 2003

⁸⁷ Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 17 August 2000

⁸⁸ Deb, 'The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta,' p. 61

Rajas, and money grew greater than lineage.”⁸⁹ According to Kaviraj, the Bengali middle-class home had, “become a theatre of serious conceptual conflicts since the start of British influence.”⁹⁰ As well as the changing social reality of Barabazaar, what Kaviraj is alluding to is the inherent conflict between preserving ‘traditional’ customs and forms, and steering a path to the ‘modern’ world, that is the ambivalence at the centre of the hybrid position. Again this reminds us of the doubling process of hybridity theory, specifically the uncertain fusing and merging of cultures, with the undermining of a dominant (in this case colonial) view.

The second development that affected nineteenth century Bengali culture was the Indian Sepoy Mutiny/ Revolt of 1857, which had the effect of making the British withdraw from their familiar mixing with Indians, and thus the role of the *banian*, or middle-man declined. In addition, as the colonial economy developed roots, the British began establishing their own trading firms; the very source of the Bengali merchant’s wealth started drying up. As the Bengali middle-classes were pushed into the background in both administrative and economic affairs, they increasingly chose the path of agitation. As Subir Raychoudhuri states, they, “grew more and more interested in forming political organizations to ventilate their own grievances.”⁹¹ Others claimed that the gap between the rich educated Bengali elite and the poorer Bengali had widened. Raychoudhuri asserts that, “the only contact with the masses remained through religious festivals and indigenous art forms like the *jatra*.”⁹²

From this time onwards, Bengali merchants confined themselves to the roles of landlord, civil servant, lawyer, doctor, poet and politician. Some remained owners of prime property in the area, but these assets were gradually eroded by fragmentation and litigation. Bengali’s dominated the city’s indigenous economy until the mid-nineteenth century. The new Bengali *Bhadralok* were now more reliant on employment or patronage from the British, as Sukumar

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 62

⁹⁰ Kaviraj, ‘Filth and the Public Sphere,’ p. 91

⁹¹ Raychoudhuri, ‘The Lost World of the Babus,’ p.75

⁹² *ibid.* According to Raychoudhuri, in, ‘The Lost World of the Babus,’ in his book, *The Parlour and the Street* (1989) Sumanta Banerji has elaborately discussed the socio-political factors behind the schism between *bhadralok* and *chhotalok* culture in Kolkata and the marginalisation of the latter, p. 75

Mitra and Amita Prasad comment, “suspended between dependence and defiance”⁹³. The decline in fortunes of the indigenous Bengali was matched by the arrival of the Rajasthani or ‘Marwari.’

The Marwari inhabitants of Kolkata numbered only a handful in the late eighteenth century. The influx of Marwaris began as the city grew in importance in the early nineteenth century. Within a short time they were entrenched in Kolkata’s bazaars as bankers and merchants. From the mid-nineteenth century, Barabazaar began to grow as a stronghold of Marwari businessmen. In the late nineteenth century, Marwari businessmen began remodelling old houses and buying sites for new houses often after new roads were constructed in Barabazaar. After the completion of Harrison Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road), connecting Haora and Shealdah station, in 1892, land on either side was rapidly bought up by Marwaris for residential houses with shops on the ground and first floors (figure 6.46). The buildings, sometimes inspired by Rajasthani architecture presented, “an unbroken facade, a mixture of showy stucco at one level with corrugated iron sheets, wood and *darma* above it.”⁹⁴ Hardgrove claims that, “with the pressure of increasing population, the Marwaris spread deeper and deeper from the main roads into the most narrow of lanes, . . . taking the place of Bengali traders in both occupation and residence.”⁹⁵

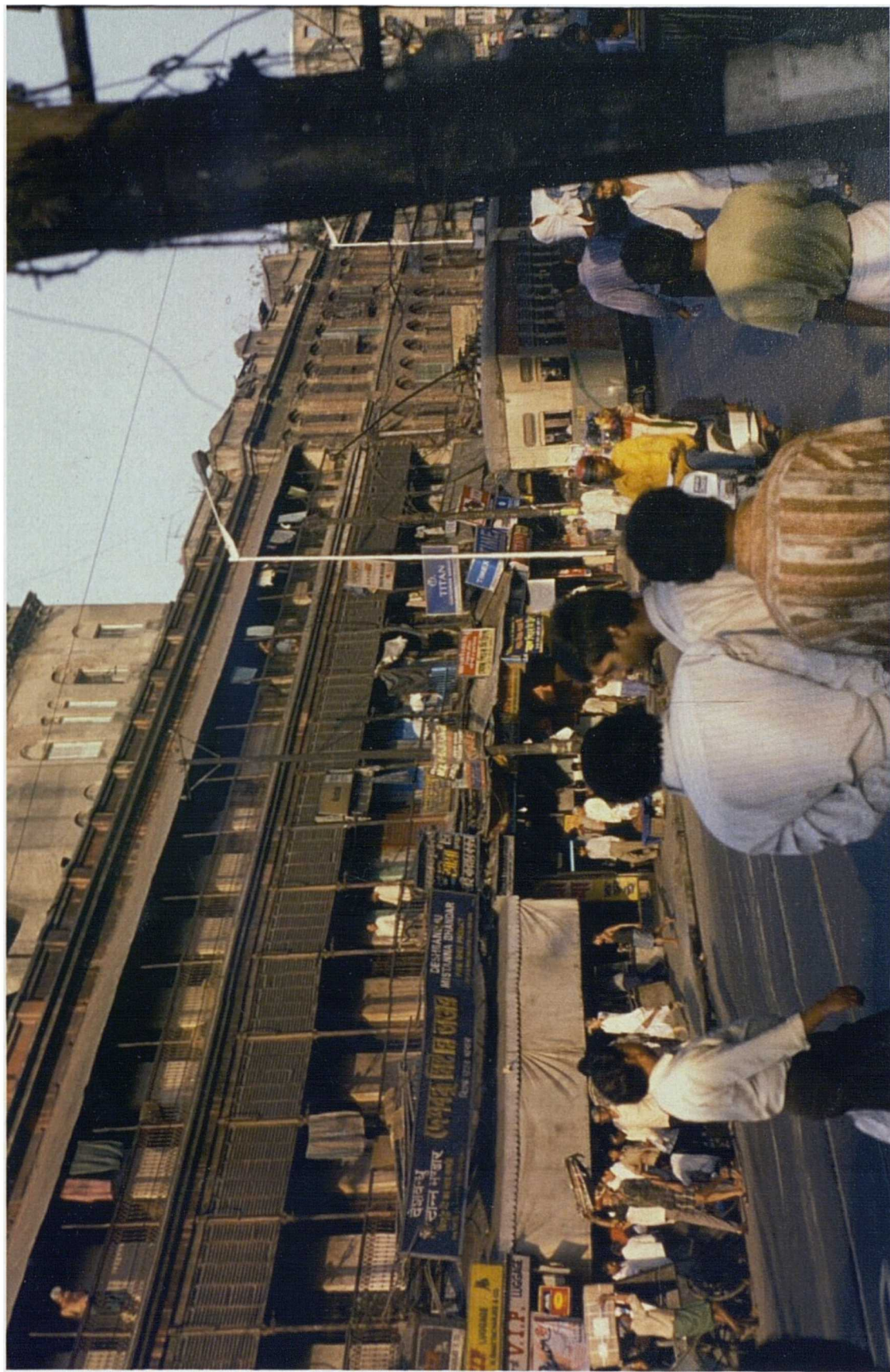
Typically, these Marwari-built houses, were multi-storeyed, commonly four storeys but on major commercial streets rising to seven, comprising businesses on the ground floor, with families on each floor above renting anything from one to several rooms. Typically, as in the houses of the Bengal elite, the arrangement of rooms is in a single row around a central court with a surrounding veranda to ensure maximum cross ventilation. Unlike their Bengali neighbours, these were functional houses, built for profit rather than show. As Hardgrove states, they, “were typically crowded, dark and sparsely furnished places.”⁹⁶ These buildings

⁹³ Mitra, Sukumar, and, Prasad, Amita ‘The Marwaris of Calcutta,’ in Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 109-112, p. 109

⁹⁴ Gupta, Bunny, and Chaliha, Jaya, ‘Barabazaar,’ in Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 113-116, p. 116

⁹⁵ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 112

⁹⁶ *ibid.*



6.46. Marwari houses on Mahatma Gandhi Road. Photographed Easter 1999

are noteworthy for their prominent arcaded galleries, separated by columns, overlooking both the street and the inner courtyard. In Kolkata, the monsoon weather and the need to maintain domestic privacy in a crowded urban area prompted the use of wooden blinds, or *jhimil*, and intricate cast iron lattice work, or *jali*, often originally cast Britain; these features shielded occupants from wind, sun, and unwanted male stares.

Nowadays, courtyard houses built by the nineteenth century educated Bengali *bhadralok* and owned by one family are few and far between. Many houses have been subdivided and sold as extended family sizes have shrunk or become more scattered. Many families have moved to south Kolkata to avoid the noise, pollution and congestion of Barabazaar. Some houses have been converted to shops and offices, and others demolished, as new buildings commanding higher rents have been built. Both Ashim Sett and Samrendra Daw agreed that Barabazaar has become much more commercial with less residential accommodation. Both live in the northern part of the market, which relatively speaking, has more housing than the area closer to the city centre in the south. Ashim Sett described the changes in the area around his house:

“Building use is totally changed. It’s now, It’s now almost fifty per cent commercial. It was previously totally for residential. The ground floor of most of the buildings have changed, in fact, in our building also, in the front part, the part which has been divided to my Uncle. The ground floor has been changed to shops. So that way building changes in the, mostly in the ground floor of the buildings, they have changed to commercial.”⁹⁷

Nowadays, with commercial pressures in Barabazaar, inevitably courtyards are being used for businesses more and are often filled in. Ashim Sett described the uses of the courtyard in his house on Sir Hariram Goenka Street:

⁹⁷ Ashim Sett, interview with the author, Kolkata, 1 August 2001

"This is now being used for a business, yes. Otherwise it was actually used for playing, we used to play badminton in our child days, we used to play cricket over there. . . Now since it is become a business, commercial place, we are using it for business purpose, that is all."⁹⁸

I pointed out to Mr Sett, that if the building use had changed from residential to commercial, then a lot of those people that lived in the houses will have moved out, and thus the social life will have changed. He agreed and clarified the changes in street life:

"Their lives are also different, they used to have a chat in the street in the evening. In fact, in Barabazaar you will never find it, you will never find people of my age say of 45, 48. Forget about it, even, even boys of say 20, 18, 20, they are talking and gossiping by the side of the tea stall, and gossiping you won't find it in Barabazaar area, you will find it in this north Calcutta and even in South Calcutta also."⁹⁹

Ashim Sett linked the recent changes in social life with the broader changes in society. For Mr. Sett, these changes were largely down to the influx of migrants from various parts of India, into Barabazaar. He explained:

"In fact, it was, in say fifty years back, it was, it was totally Bengali dominated area. Now it has changed to, first of all only thirty five, thirty five to thirty percent Bengalis are there. And basically Marwaris are basically here, and for labour class these people from Bihar and Orissa. So they have come in to this thing, they taken small rooms, as they intended to use, started staying over this place. So that way the, that structure of that society has changed in this area."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

Mirroring such changes in urban life, the collective form of privacy found in the extended family, and embodied in the architecture and social practices of the courtyard house, is slowly beginning to change as families live their 'private' lives more separately. Ashim Sett thought that the notion of the extended family was breaking up, claiming that ninety percent of families in Kolkata still lived as extended families. He modified this slightly when I asked him if he thought it was more common to live separately in the South of Kolkata, an area seen as more 'modern' than Barabazaar. His reply was, "yes, yes. In fact, the joint families stays in those old areas of Calcutta, in Shyambazaar, in Bagbazaar, you will find a lot of families still living there jointly."¹⁰¹ The Daw family arguably the most conservative live fully as an extended family. Mr. Daw was fairly non-committal on the subject of the extended family simply saying, "nuclear family will be started after my death. Right you are."¹⁰²

The house that clearly illustrates the breakdown of the extended family is the Rohatgi house, and for Mr. Rohatgi, the break up and reduction in size of his own extended family was a favourite topic of conversation, and one clearly tinged with some disappointment. Mr. Rohatgi's father was the oldest brother and according to him, looked after his uncle's family before his own. (For his father, doing otherwise would be a slur on the family name.) He talked about how in the past his family were seen as people of standing in the community. Echoing the mid-nineteenth century Bengali critics, like Banerji and Sinha mentioned earlier, Mr. Rohatgi stated, his family did not need to flaunt their wealth, like the new rich do now. He said, "we did not need to go out in a new car, anything would do, my wife did not have to wear expensive jewellery". He talked about, "ambition being the driving force now, whereas then it was to keep the peace, being content and satisfied".¹⁰³ On one occasion, he told me how his father had wanted all his brothers and sisters to settle in flats next door in, 44, Armenian Street, but they could not because the tenants who were living there were impossible to relocate. He gave this as the reason for why the family are scattered all over India now.¹⁰⁴ In many ways, Prabhat and Shashi Rohatgi did not live in their house as it had originally been

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Samarendra Daw, interview with the author, Kolkata, 23 July 2001

¹⁰³ Prabhat Rohatgi, interview with the author, Kolkata, 13 August 2000

¹⁰⁴ Prabhat Rohatgi, interview with the author, Kolkata, 5 August 2001

conceived, with living centred around the courtyard. Instead they now had a self-contained flat that just happened to open onto one side of the courtyard.

Also inevitably, the place of religious ritual in the courtyard house is changing. Nowadays, as families have become more scattered and rarely live in the traditional courtyard house, *Durga Puja* is often run by a committee of local residents or by the *mohalla* committee (refer to chapter 7). As Chaliha and Gupta comment, “community lunch on the Puja days restores the spirit of the joint family without its problems.”¹⁰⁵ *Durga* herself has kept up with changing fashions, and as Chaliha and Gupta again describe, “often bears a clear resemblance to some leading film star.”¹⁰⁶ Trader B, a Barabazaar paper trader pointed out that, weddings are now mostly held in hotels or in purpose-built centres, rather than the family courtyard house.¹⁰⁷

This conclusion cannot offer a closure, far less a definitive explanation for a changing and contradictory distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ life, and for a Bengali modern that is still being negotiated in Barabazaar today. As Bhabha notes, attention to place does not presuppose closure, for the representation of identity most often occurs precisely at the point when there has been displacement.¹⁰⁸ For Bhabha the hybrid is formed, out of the dual process of displacement and correspondence in the act of translation. Meaning seldom translates with pristine integrity, and often requires a degree of improvisation. Hybrid identities, therefore, are formed not out of an excavation and transferral of foreignness into the familiar, but out of this awareness of the incomplete interpretation that lingers on. It is from this position of ‘in-betweenness’ that Bhabha suggests the most interrogative forms of culture are produced, situated as they are at the cleavages and fissures of class, race, gender, nation and location. Bhabha encourages us to perceive this irresolvable, borderline, interstitial culture, which is at once, “the *time* of cultural displacement, and the *space* of the

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 335

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 336

¹⁰⁷ Trader B, interview with the author, Kolkata, 24 July 2001

¹⁰⁸ Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p. 185

'untranslatable'.¹⁰⁹ The case of hybridity is pressed because the process of translation is, in his view, one of the most compelling tasks for the cultural critic in the modern world today.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 225

CHAPTER 7

HYBRID BAZAAR SPACE: 'OUTSIDE' LIFE IN THE STREETS OF BARABAZAAR

"Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject! . . . I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions: Is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? Can only the dead speak?"

Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p.23

Chapter Summary

Whilst the previous chapter focused on Bengali communities in Barabazaar, this chapter looks at the Marwari population. I focus on the culture of the street and the bazaar, which in India, arguably has formed a 'spatial complex;' a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. I begin by outlining the idea of the street and the bazaar as an ambiguous place for dealing with 'outsiders,' and the production of the 'Marwari' as an outsider within the context of Barabazaar. Next, I describe the Marwari culture in Barabazaar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and emerging trading networks. I describe the social organisation of the bazaar, explaining the everyday life of Barabazaar, and including bazaar 'private' relationships, which perhaps point to limits in hybridity theory. Investigating case studies located in two streets in the south of Barabazaar, an established area for small businesses selling paper and stationary, attitudes to 'public' life are explored, in order to understand how the culture of the street and bazaar is developing today. I conclude by reflecting on the continuing changes in 'public and 'private' Marwari life in current day Barabazaar, identifying the 'hawkers' as the new 'outsiders.'

Introduction: the 'Outside,' the 'Outsider,' and the 'Marwari'

Anand A. Yang, in, *Bazaar India Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar*, reminds us, "to read markets of the colonial era as historical texts of exchange relations emblematic of the 'local way of life,' . . . requires journeying through the 'Oriental market,' that exoticized Other place of Western imagination."¹ Yang contextualises the 'space' of the bazaar in comparison to the related and interlinked sites of village and caste. As Yang asserts, "like caste, the village was isolated by the colonial discourse as one of the major sites at which the 'real India' was knowable."² Like caste, the village attained paradigmatic status as a representation of rural society and as a template of the structure and organization of indigenous society and economy. Yang explains that, "the representations of this imagined village persisted well into the twentieth century, the village's many-layered images

¹ Yang, Anand A., *Bazaar India. Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, p. 2

² *ibid.*, p. 5

accommodating the projections of colonial administrators and scholars (e.g., Metcalf and B. H. Baden Powell), theoreticians (e.g., Marx and Maine), and nationalist leaders and scholars (e.g., Gandhi, Nehru, Dutt).³ These colonial representations of 'village India,' reflected the biases of the colonial record and followed the familiar tropes of an unchanging world that embodied 'tradition,' inhabited by largely backward people. In part, these arguments were the justification for colonial rule and of modernity, that have been explained and explored more fully in Chapter One. Therefore, to represent the market requires an act of deconstruction, or as Yang puts it to detach, "that place from its Orientalist moorings."⁴

Within the context of India, Dipesh Chakrabarty interprets, the marketplace as the name given, "to that unenclosed, exposed and interstitial 'outside' which acts as the meeting point of several communities."⁵ Chakrabarty acknowledges Stallybrass and Allon's book, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, and echoing their study goes on to say,

"In contrast to the ritually enclosed inside, the outside, for which we have used the bazaar as a paradigm, has a deeply ambiguous character. It is exposed and therefore malevolent. It is not subject to a single set of (enclosing) rules and rituals defining a community. It is where miscegenation occurs. All that do not belong to the 'inside' (family/ kinship/ community) lie there, cheek by jowl, in unassorted collection, violating rules of mixing: from faeces to prostitutes. It is, in other words, a place against which one needs protection. . ."⁶

Chakrabarty argues that the street and the bazaar, which for a long time formed a 'spatial complex' in India, is a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. His definition of 'outside' space in the bazaar seems to echo Bakhtin's notion of the marketplace as, 'all that is unofficial.' Chakrabarty explains that, "in Bengali language, for instance, the word 'bajar'

³ *ibid.*, p. 9

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 2

⁵ Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 7-14, 1992, pp. 541-547, p. 543

⁶ *ibid.*

(bazaar) is often used in a metaphorical way to represent an 'outside' to 'ghar-shangshar' (the way of the householder i.e. domesticity); thus prostitutes are called 'bajarer meye' (women of the bazaar) as opposed to the implicit conception of 'gharer meye' housewives or women of the household."⁷

Chakrabarty interprets the bazaar as, "a place where one comes across and deals with strangers."⁸ Chakrabarty argues that as 'strangers' are suspect and potentially dangerous, themes such as 'familiarity' and 'unfamiliarity,' and 'trust' and 'mistrust,' play themselves out in different aspects of the bazaar. Interactions within the bazaar have to do with overcoming the mistrust of the outsider in a space where transactions are contingent on trust. According to Chakrabarty, "all 'economic' transactions here - bargaining, lending and borrowing, buying and selling - are marked by these themes. . . . protestations of honesty, for example are a recursive feature of bargaining talk."⁹ Prices reflect the concern with trust and familiarity. Chakrabarty continues:

"The inside/ outside dichotomy, therefore, is a matter of constant performance in the exchanges of the bazaar. The duality of this space is inescapable. It harbours qualities that threaten one's well-being. Strangers embody these qualities. Yet it provides a venue for linkage across communities, with 'strangers'." ¹⁰

Outsiders, pariahs, strangers, middlemen minorities, and economic intermediaries found in market places are discussed by both Max Weber and Georg Simmel.¹¹ Weber suggests that many of the leading communities in India originated as pariahs, and cites as evidence their status in early twentieth century Bengal. Weber's definition of a "pariah entrepreneur," is quoted by Thomas A. Timberg in, *The Marwaris From Traders to Industrialists*, referring to the Marwaris of Barabazaar, as follows:

⁷ ibid.

⁸ ibid.

⁹ ibid.

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ Georg Simmel, 'The Strangers,' in, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, Donald Levine (Ed.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971

"In our usage, 'pariah people' denotes a distinctive hereditary social group lacking autonomous political organization and characterized by prohibitions against commensality and intermarriage originally founded upon magical, tabooist, and ritual injunctions. Two additional traits of a pariah people are political and social disprivilege and a far-reaching distinctiveness in economic function."¹²

Timberg goes on to state that the economic success of Marwaris in part was due to their position as an 'outside' or 'marginal' group, which are,

"more likely to innovate because they are exempt from some of the sanctions of society against deviance. Further avenues to social advancement other than the commercial are often closed to them . . . I should note that marginal groups of outsiders are especially likely to have developed among themselves a strong community articulation - an articulation whose institutions can easily be adapted to trading."¹³

Strangers or 'outsiders' would appear to embody the qualities of 'organic' hybridity, able to absorb and adjust to new cultures, characteristic of the marketplace. The ambivalent space which outsiders occupy enables them to act as intermediaries, negotiating the various communities in the marketplace, and the separate and opposed categories typical of 'intentional' hybridity. I will now explain how one such group of outsiders, the Marwaris, emerged in nineteenth century Barabazaar.

¹² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, 1962, p. 108-109, quoted in, Timberg, Thomas A., *The Marwaris from Traders to Industrialists*, Vikas Publishing house, New Delhi, 1978, p. 30

¹³ Timberg, Thomas, *The Marwari from Traders to Industrialists*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978, p. 26

Nineteenth Century Marwari Culture in Barabazaar

Over the last three hundred years, migrant merchant traders travelled from Rajasthani villages to towns and cities across northern and eastern India. These traders became known as 'Mawaris' and renowned all over India for having emerged in the 19th century as the most prominent group of migrant *banians* for the British in their colonial involvement in commerce.¹⁴ As Hardgrove acknowledges, "though the migrant traders came from villages scattered all over eastern Rajasthan, belonged to a variety of trading lineages, and identified themselves by various subcastes as well as by religious labels like Hindu and Jain, by the late 19th century these traders also acquired the unwanted ethnic tag Marwari."¹⁵ Hardgrove also states, "for despite what their name suggests, Marwaris do not literally come from 'Marwar' a multivalent term which (among other things) generally refers to an historically important district in central Rajasthan, the erstwhile princely state of Marwar which is now the district of Jodhpur."¹⁶ The composition of the Marwari community is a recent historical development, emerging well after the collapse of the Marwar kingdom. In fact, Timberg writes that the, "most prominent groups of Marwaris," in Kolkata are the Maheshwari and Aggarwal trading castes from the Shekhawati region, north of Jaipur.¹⁷ The historical importance of the Marwar kingdom and its continuing presence as an enduring place name, may partially account for the fact that this diasporic and expatriate business group has been called Marwari instead of Shekhawati, the name of the district where most Marwaris come from.

The majority of Marwari migrant traders settled in colonial trading centres, first in Bombay and later on especially in Kolkata and Eastern India. The Marwaris became especially prominent in Bengal, where they quickly became a formidable economic ruling class under colonialism and even more so in independent India. The very earliest wave of migrants into Bengal who eventually became identified as Marwari are the *Saharwale* Oswal Jain merchants of

¹⁴ For an explanation of the rise of the Marwari as a moneylender in the colonial context, refer to: Anne Elizabeth Hardgrove, *Community as Public Culture in Modern India: The Marwaris in Calcutta, c. 1897-1997*, PhD in Anthropology and History, University of Michigan, 1999, p. 8, 9

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 74

¹⁷ Timberg, *The Marwaris*, p. 75-84

Murshidabad. They began their migrations to Bengal starting at the end of the 17th century.¹⁸ The establishment of the mint at Murshidabad in the early 18th century made it into the Mughal capital of Bengal. Said to have originated and migrated mainly from Bikaner, these Oswal merchants set up a colony in the town of Azimganj in Murshidabad north of Kolkata, where they built grand temples along the Bhagirathi river. Many bought large land holdings and assimilated their life style to that of the landed gentry of Bengal. The head of this community of merchants Mahatabchand was given the hereditary title Jagat Seth, or 'Banker of the World,' while serving the Mughal Nawabs of Bengal up until the end of the reign of Siraj ud-Daula. These Oswals were considered by colonial ethnographers to be the, "Rothschilds of India." According to Mitra and Prasad, in their article, 'The Marwaris of Calcutta,' "in 1753 they were the sole purchasers of all the bullion imported into Bengal."¹⁹ European traders in Bengal found it impossible to operate without the aid of Jagat Seth. In 1763, after Jagat Seth's alliance with the English, and his part in a deal to elevate Siraj ud-Daula's uncle Mir Jafir to the position of Nawab, Nawab Mir Kasim had Mahatabchand and his brother murdered. After the murder of Jagat Seth, Murshidabad declined and many of these Oswal Saharwales eventually came to Kolkata, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Marwari inhabitants of Kolkata numbered only a handful in the late eighteenth century. According to Timberg, "an early report tells of 80 Marwaris in Kolkata in 1813, another of 600 in 1833."²⁰ The influx of Marwaris began as the city grew in importance in the early nineteenth century. Some of today's best-known Marwari families - the Singhanias, the Sarafs, the Kotharis and the Bagris - were established in business by the 1830's.²¹ Timberg writes, that the first business firms from Rajasthan, were already in place in Kolkata by the 1840s, being extensions of firms dating from the eighteenth Century further west. The reportedly first Marwari *banian*, Nathuram Saraf, notes Timberg, arrived in the 1830s from Mandawa, and worked as a guaranteed broker to Kinsell and Ghose.²² According to Timberg, "the first

¹⁸ *Saharwale* literally means resident (*wale*) of the city (*sahar*) or hailing from Murshidabad.

¹⁹ Mitra, Sukumar and, Prasad, Amita, 'The Marwaris of Calcutta,' in *Calcutta The Living City, Volume II: The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 109-112, p. 109

²⁰ Timberg, *The Marwaris*, p. 186

²¹ Mitra, and Prasad, 'The Marwaris of Calcutta,' p. 109

²² Timberg, *The Marwaris*, p. 186

migrants to Calcutta seemed to have hitched rides as supercargoes aboard river boats belonging to the big Marwari firms with branches in Mirzapur at the eastern end of the Ganges valley.”²³ In Kolkata, the Marwari migrants started as agents or clerks to the larger Marwari firms and soon moved into business on their own. From the mid-nineteenth century, Barabazaar began to grow as a stronghold of Marwari businessmen.²⁴ After the construction of the Delhi-Calcutta railway in 1858-60, Marwaris began arriving in ever larger numbers.

Hardgrove claims that, one of the most important moments of social upheaval, for the creation of a national Marwari identity, can be traced back to the Deccan Agriculturalist riots in rural Maharashtra in 1875, when thousands of peasants in a large number of villages in Poona and Ahmadnagar Districts went on a spate of violence against Marwari money lenders.²⁵ This critique which helped to cast the figure of the Marwari in the European mould of the Jew, contributed to the emergence of the new pan-Indian category, ‘Marwari.’ According to Hardgrove, “historical evidence does not suggest that any great change in the transfer of land ownership was responsible for creating the conditions of possibility for the riots.”²⁶ Hardgrove highlights Neil Charlsworthy’s suggestion that the Deccan riots singled out Marwari moneylenders, and not the Brahmin moneylenders who were much more hungry to acquire land. She claims that this gives further substantiation to the claim that control over land ownership was not at the root of widespread social distress. Hardgrove concludes by asserting that, “the problem of the Marwari moneylenders being perceived as ‘outsiders’ was the more important ingredient in making sense of why the riots happened.”²⁷ The blame placed on the Marwaris as the villains of the Deccan riots have been followed by many twentieth-century examples. Hardgrove cites Marwari involvement in, “perceived ‘excessive’ and ‘evil’ capitalism, including widespread gambling and speculation on commodities, the

²³ *ibid.*, p. 52

²⁴ For a detailed explanation of the nineteenth century growth of Barabazaar, refer to: Prajnanda Banerjee, ‘Chapter IV Growth of Burrabazar,’ *Calcutta and its Hinterland, A Study in Economic History of India, 1833-1900*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 110-138

²⁵ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 14

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 15

²⁷ *ibid.*

adulteration of religiously-valued food commodities such as *ghee*, and wartime rumours of Marwari merchants hoarding of food in time of widespread famine.”²⁸

In light of the relatively uneven fortunes among Bengali and Marwari trading groups during the late nineteenth century (outlined at the end of Chapter six), economic critiques that were applied against the British were equally applied to internal economic adversaries, such as Marwaris. According to Hardgrove, “rhetoric similar to that used by Dadbhai Naoroji in his famous argument that the British drained India of her wealth was used against Marwari traders in Bengal, as people interested in making money but who sent it outside to Rajasthan.”²⁹ Similarly, the Bengali nationalist Prafulla Chandra Ray’s autobiography, *Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist* (1932), is a well known text documenting a modern Bengali ambivalence about Marwaris.³⁰ According to Hardgrove, Ray unfavourably compared the urban-dwelling Bengali gentry to the more fiscally minded conservative Marwaris. The latter Ray argued, earned a thousand times more than they actually spent, unlike the anglicised Bengal Zamindars, “mere parasites,” who, “do not add a single farthing to the country’s wealth, but have become the chosen instruments for the draining away of the country’s wealth - the life-blood of the peasants - to foreign lands.”³¹ Despite his stated admiration for hard work and business aptitude, Ray criticised Marwaris for not re-investing their wealth back into the Bengal economy. Even the Marwari diet, argued Ray, contributed to this divestment. The Marwaris, “survived on dal, ghee, and wheat flour - all items imported from outside of Bengal.”³² Ray explains in more detail:

“whatever they spend finds its way back into their own pockets. Hence the Marwari or the Bhatia or the Punjabi, although they make their money and live in Calcutta, seldom add any wealth to Bengal nor is Bengal in any way

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 16

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19

³⁰ Ray, Prafulla Chandra, *Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist* (1932), 2 vols., Chukerverty, Chatterjee and Co., 1996

³¹ Ray, *Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist*, p. 17, quoted in, Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 20

³² *ibid.*

materially benefited by their being residents of Bengal. They might as well have been residents of Kamchkatka or Timbuctoo.”³³

A further critique illustrating the popular stereotypical differences between Bengalis and Marwaris, in Barabazaar, was written by Frank C. Bankcroft in 1934, in an article titled, “Calcutta Corners - III Burra Bazaar,” in the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*. In the article, he describes a walk along Harrison Road, from Sealdah past College Street to Howrah an area predominantly inhabited by Marwari businesses. He meets a Bengali called Mr. Bose who was buying some cheap office equipment and a set of account books:

“ ‘Please do not misunderstand me,’ said Mr. Bose, ‘I am not going to do anything so vulgar as going into business. We are having a drama. One of the characters is a business-man. It is in the interests of pure art that I have come to Burrabazaar.’ ”³⁴

This incident causes Bankcroft to reflect on the differences between the two communities, where one appeared to be solely interested in matters of art the other only in business: “it might be a good thing if a few of the bespectacled young gentry from College Street occasionally sauntered down into Burrabazaar to learn a little of the gentle technique of how to amass shekels; and it might not harm the younger worthies of those quarters to attend a few lectures in the near-by colleges, blind as they are.”³⁵

What these critiques often highlight are limits to mixing in the bazaar, or particular distinctions between these two bazaar communities. These events also had the effect of reinforcing the migrant Marwari as ‘outsider,’ both in the communities they moved to, and those that they left behind.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Bankcroft, Frank C., ‘Calcutta Corners - III Burra Bazaar,’ *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, 20 January, 1934, pp. 375-376, p.375

³⁵ *ibid.*

Emerging Trading Networks

Between the consolidation of British power in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the Indian Sepoy Mutiny/ Revolt of 1857, the British rapidly extended their commercial network all over India. Indigo and opium, and later cotton and tea, were developed as export crops, and British export to India, pre-eminently of cotton piece-goods, expanded dramatically. Marwaris emerged as some of the important dealers and brokers in the newly opened commercial markets, and financed especially the growth of new cash crops, which the British demanded. Timberg states that, "the role of the [Marwari] *banian* to British cotton cloth importing firms was secured from 1870 to 1900."³⁶ The cloth import trade was the most important one conducted in Kolkata, and the one in which the bulk of Marwaris got their start. According to Timberg, "in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam and north Bengal, [Marwaris] had a monopoly on the export of all products except tea, and on the import of all provisions."³⁷ Somewhat later, the development of the jute industry, originally a Bengali trade, began to interest first the Oswals such as Jivanmal Bengani, and from 1900 other sections of the Marwari community. Timberg asserts that, "by 1900, more than one half of the jute balers were Marwaris,"³⁸ and the jute industry, "was predominantly Marwari by 1914."³⁹

As Marwari brokers advanced to the ranks of *banians*, simultaneously Marwari *shroffs*, or indigenous bankers, strengthened their hold on the banking of Kolkata. According to Timberg, "a list of 'Native Bankers' in a commercial directory in 1864 is probably at least half Marwari."⁴⁰ As colonial Kolkata's centre of 'indigenous banking' and commerce, Barabazaar housed thousands of small *gaddi* or small 'shop/office' units (figure 7.1). *Gaddi* literally means seat cushion, but is a euphemism for a business firm. The floor of the *gaddi* is covered with a mattress and white cotton sheet over it, with roll shaped pillows to support the back. Trader B, a Barabazaar paper merchant, described how *gaddis* had worked in the past and what he

³⁶ Timberg, *The Marwaris*, p. 65

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 43

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 53

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 65

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 53



7.1. Gaddis on Cotton Street. Photographed August 2001

called, '*gaddi* mentality.'⁴¹ The *gaddi wallah* would provide accommodation for his extended family in the *gaddi*, as well as food, welfare, and money lending. Relatives who often came from Rajasthan sent most of their money back to their families. In the evenings, inhabitants of the *gaddi* played cards. The merchants traded across the whole of India from their *gaddi*, mostly on trust. One per cent of all business transactions in the *gaddi* went towards charity. Trader B described how when his ancestors first came to Barabazaar they were content with just staying in their *gaddi*. Later people expected more, and rented a room to live in, then perhaps a flat or house. Trader E's family business was run by three brothers on very traditional lines, with the usual Marwari *gaddi* set up.

In general, it can be said that a wide range of people and castes participated in indigenous trading networks that stretched across India during the nineteenth century. At its base peddlers operated in a single rural locality, or moved through the villages as itinerant traders, connecting rural areas with market towns. Market towns were connected to each other and to the great indigenous money markets of Bombay, Kolkata, and Delhi. Dwijendra Tripathi explains that, "this urban marketing and financial network was integrated by *hundis*, or bills of exchange, and by *arhatiyas*, or commission agents who acted for each other at different centres."⁴² A *hundi*, similar to a modern cheque, was a written order made by one person for payment to another for a certain sum. As Hardgrove indicates, "the exchange, honouring and discounting of *hundis* rested on networks of trust, which created important trans-regional linkages and opportunities for the accumulation of wealth."⁴³ The *shroffs*, who discounted the *hundis*, and the *arhatiyas*, who ensured the movement of goods, tended to come from specialised communities. Thus, certain distinct communities with strong migrant tendencies, like Marwaris, dominated the long distance networks of trade that functioned through bills of exchange and commission agencies. Furthermore as Tripathi explains, "throughout Eastern India the trade in produce in its early stages was mainly in the hands of local traders, but at

⁴¹ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁴² Tripathi, Dwijendra, *Business Communities of India A Historical Perspective*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1984, p. 243

⁴³ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 8, 9

the stage before export or import particularly through the port of Kolkata it was gathered into the hands of Europeans, Marwaris and Cutchi Muslims.”⁴⁴

Thus, the migrant merchant communities of India, and Marwaris in particular, successfully created new long distance networks of trade and finance in the colonial period, by realigning the indigenous economy along a new *hundi* network, with Bombay and Kolkata as its nodal points. Tripathi explains the significance of Barabazaar in these new long distance networks:

“The nerve centre of the indigenous money market in Eastern India, Barabazaar . . . was dominated by Marwari bankers and merchants . . . From Barabazaar these great *Kothiwal*s financed the centres of Marwari banking and trade eastwards in Assam and East Bengal - Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Nowgong, Gauhati, Dacca, Chittagong, etc. - and westwards to Bihar and beyond - Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Ranchi, etc. Dealers and pedlars in the Assam valley - Assamese, Bengalis, well-to-do Mymensingh cultivators - were the subordinate instruments of big Marwari firms which financed them and collected their produce. In East Bengal, Saha, Tili and other Bengali merchants had large-scale independent businesses in their hands, but the top level of jute supply was dominated by European and Marwari firms with Calcutta as headquarters.”⁴⁵

Thus, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the business opportunities offered by colonial expansion, arguably led to the development of hybrid trading arrangements. The impact of new forms of colonial transport, particularly rail, and the expansion of colonial cities like Kolkata had a significant influence on these trading arrangements. ‘Traditional’ rural indigenous systems operated with more ‘modern’ regional and national networks, managed simultaneously by Marwari, Bengali, and colonial communities. There were many differing and changing mappings of (or hybrid attitudes to) the idea of the bazaar, framed by the differing groups of people that engaged with it. It is the distinction between the ‘modern’

⁴⁴ Tripathi, *Business Communities of India*, p. 243

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 242

colonial and the more 'traditional' indigenous bazaar geographies that is explored next. I wish to emphasise that these are only some amongst many of the representations of the bazaar.

Social Organisation of the Bazaar

According to Rory Fonseca, in his article, 'The Walled City of Old Delhi,' the characteristic spatial structure of, "the indigenous urban scene," can be traced back to, "rural communities, and their basis on caste division."⁴⁶ Indian society was long thought of as divided into five castes: *Brahmins*, or priests; *Ksatriya*, or warriors; *Vaisya*, or merchants; *Sudra*, or artisans and menials; and 'untouchables', or Scheduled Castes. The hierarchical order within the caste system related to the concept of ritual purity and pollution. Thus the Brahmin, who has the highest ritual status, cannot pollute others, but is prone to pollution by various forms of physical and social contact with others. In the rural community occupations are often hereditary, with related households living contiguously, grouped together around a common courtyard. What this meant for the spatial structure of the village was a patchwork pattern of occupational clusters, embodying the living principles of social behaviour. Fonseca explains in more detail:

"The spatial structure of the community is one of enclaves, where unclean occupations cluster on the periphery while clean or dominant groups occupy prime locations. The boundaries between enclaves are sometimes open ground where service facilities are located, e.g., water well, temple, bazaar, allowing all levels to interrelate without the upper caste group risking pollution by entering deep into the enclave. At other times the boundaries are simply common walls of houses or courtyards, or streets between groups of houses."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Fonseca, Rory, 'The Walled City of Old Delhi,' *Shelter and Society*, Paul Oliver (ed.), Barry and Jenkins, London, 1969, p. 107

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

In the urban setting these enclaves became identified as *mohallas*, or neighbourhoods, and according to Fonseca, related, “to the occupation, religion or geographical origin of the mohalla dwellers.”⁴⁸ The *mohalla* and their related occupations is what gives the Indian urban market its character of clustered trades. A *mohalla* is an area of residential and commercial activity often fronting onto a spine street that more often than not has a network of *galis*, *kuchas*, *katras*, and *chattas* reaching out from the spine into the interior of the *mohalla*.⁴⁹ Although many of the *galis* may terminate as blind alleys, some connect to other *galis* through gateways or chowks. Thus while the spine of the *mohalla* is spatially defined, the perimeter is often more nebulous. A *mohalla* may contain its own bazaar mosque or temple, school, and through its council care for orphaned children. Fonseca maintains, “there is a well defined social hierarchy within a mohalla and a mohalla council - the equivalent of the council of village elders (the *panchayat*) - which enforces rules governing public and private behaviour.”⁵⁰

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his article, ‘Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen’s Gaze,’ connections between the mohalla and the inside/ outsider divisions of identity is widely accepted in literature.”⁵¹ Chakrabarty cites Nita Kumar’s classic study, *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity*, where she explains people’s identification with *mohallas* in Banaras, and how with increasing population and urban growth this connection is changing:

“I have never known anyone to speak any other way but fondly and respectfully of their own mohalla, or, conversely to ever speak of other mohallas with direct affection or admiration. There is a well-ingrained identification of self with neighbourhood, confirmable ad nauseam by the

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 109

⁴⁹ The word *Gali* is frequently interchanged for *Kucha*, *Katra* and *Mohalla*. A linear entity is implied in the use of *Kucha* and *Gali*, while *Mohalla* and *Katra* imply zones. A *Katra* is by definition a market with residential quarters and storage facilities enclosed by high walls and entered through a gate. Thus, only *Kucha* and *Gali* can be interpreted as a street in the conventional sense. When the upper storey of a residential structure crosses over a street or lane, the term *Chatta* is used instead of *Kucha* or *Gali*. (Source: Fonseca, Rory, ‘The Walled City of Old Delhi,’ p. 108, 109)

⁵⁰ Fonseca, Rory, ‘The Walled City of Old Delhi,’ p. 109

⁵¹ Chakrabarty, ‘Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen’s Gaze,’ p. 542

familiar question upon first meeting; not, “who are you?” but, “where are you from?” . . . The other habit in Banaras of giving one’s address simply as one’s name and mohalla has lost its viability, it seems to me, with urban and population growth. On repeated occasions, I lost contacts: in a place like Kashipura, a motor parts repairman would simply never have heard of a metalworker called “Chhedi” or “Kallu” who lived in the very same mohalla, whereas all the address I had been given was “Kallu from Kashipura.”⁵²

Chattopadhyay explains further some of the indigenous patterns of city space in the bazaar:

“*Paras*, *tolas*, and *tulis* were the Bengali terms used to distinguish localities. The *paras* covered an area approximately 1/4 by 1/2 mile, a space that was within easy walking distance. Cognitively, the space constituted a territory, and derived a sense of identity from a physical feature, which could be a *bagan*, or garden, *pukur* or pond, or a bazaar (invariably implying the presence of a wealthy house who owned the bazaar). Localities such as Banstola, Champatola, Chorebagan, and Jhamapukur can be seen clearly delineated in Simms’ 1854 map.”⁵³

Each *para* may contain several *mohallas*, and were inhabited by people of a particular social unit known as a *jati*. Each *jati* being loosely identifiable with one of the more ancient five caste divisions, they were often associated with a particular occupation. Members of a *jati* formed a cohesive group, bound together by specific customs governing all aspects of their individual and collective life. According to Öster, “larger neighbourhoods are usually multicaste residential areas, often named after the most numerous caste within its boundaries.”⁵⁴ The names of certain parts of Kolkata reflect their artisan origins: Kumortuli (potters’

⁵² Kumar, Nita, *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1988, pp. 71-72

⁵³ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 140, 141

⁵⁴ Östör, Ákos, *Culture and Power Legend, Ritual, Bazaar and Rebellion in a Bengali Society*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1984, p. 26, 27

neighbourhood); Darjipara (tailors' neighbourhood); Muchipara (tanners' and cobblers' neighbourhood); and Kolutola (oil pressers' neighbourhood).⁵⁵

Although the localities did not have fixed boundaries, they were mostly contained by four streets, and formed a block that its residents could identify with. The colonial government sought to capitalise on this indigenous organisation and according to Chattopadhyay, "this recognition of the city in terms of *paras* was reflected in the 1875 designation of *thanas* for policing purposes."⁵⁶ The city was divided into 31 *thanas* roughly corresponding to the *paras*. In the nineteenth century, the *thanas* were replaced by wards for administrative purposes. The wards encompassed larger areas, with the ward boundaries corresponding to the major transport arteries, and paying little attention to the notion of *paras*.

Thus, echoing the changing social reality of Barabazaar (and like the courtyard house discussed in chapter six), the idea of the bazaar was affected by a range of 'modern' colonial European readings, and more indigenous perspectives. At this point, I wish to highlight the multiple or competing 'representations' under which the idea of the bazaar was configured in the past. In reality, the bazaar never was a place of fixed ideas and locations emblematic of a way of life. This changing social reality continues to this day, and it is the contemporary everyday life in Barabazaar that is explored next.

Barabazaar Everyday Life

According to Ákos Östör, in his study of a Bengali bazaar, and to a certain extent echoing Bakhtin's analysis of the market place, "the bazaar person sees the town, the people, and indeed life itself reflected in the rhythm of bazaar activities."⁵⁷ He continues to describe the changing daily patterns of everyday life in the traditional bazaar:

⁵⁵ Dutta, Krishna, *Calcutta A Cultural and Literary History*, Signal Books, Oxford, 2003, p.24

⁵⁶ Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta*, p. 141

⁵⁷ Östör, *Culture and Power*, p. 95

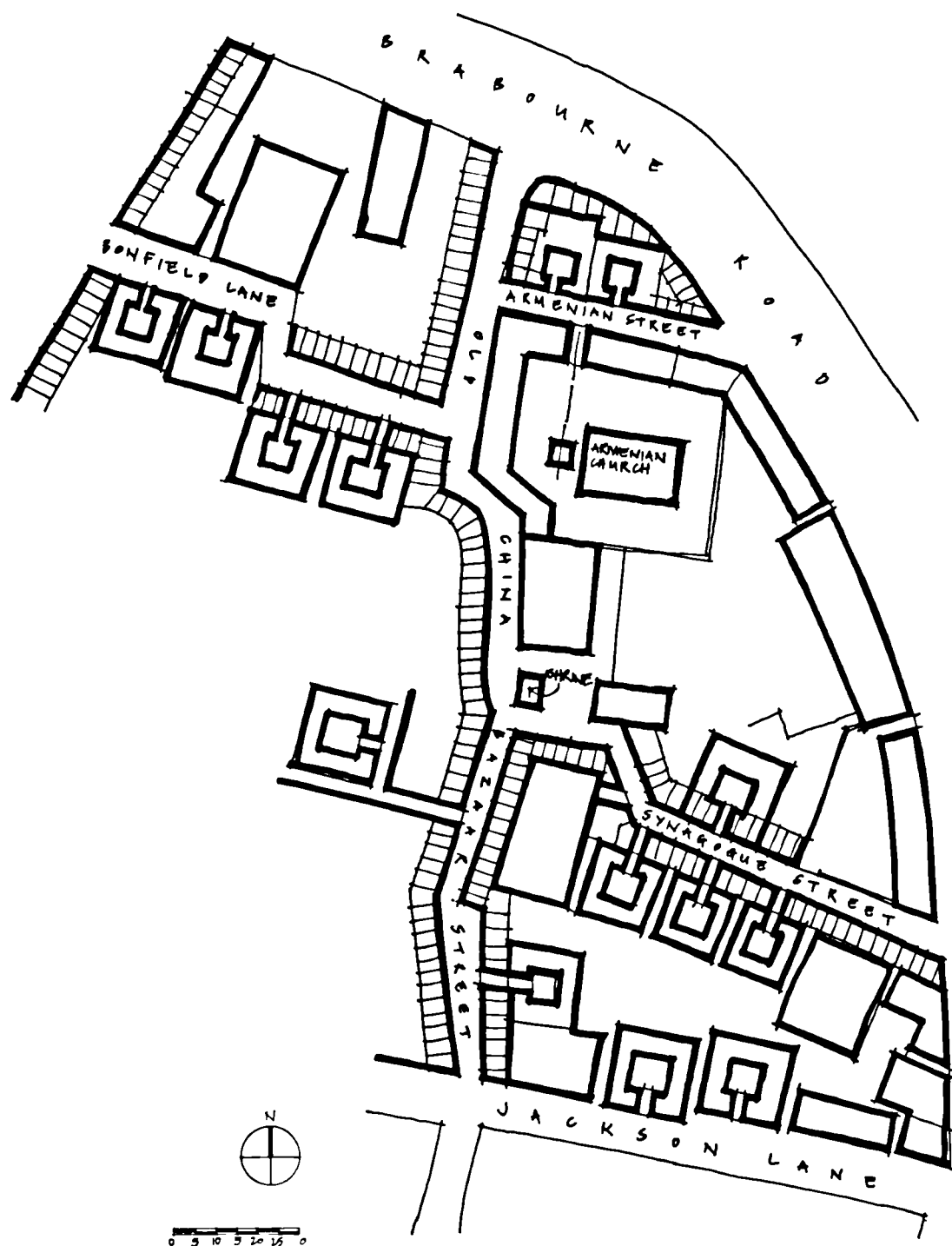
“Trade is brisk in the morning when salaried people, officials, and students make their purchases before going to work. These are favourite customers because they come regularly, choose quickly, and buy everything from one shop. Women and those out of work come later: the employment pattern of the town is also expressed in the day's bazaar. Throughout the late morning, supplies are brought in from neighbouring villages. By noon the pace becomes calmer. Bazaar people go home in the early afternoon for the main meal of rice. The baskets of produce are covered with sackcloth and left in the open: no one will disturb them till the owner returns. Bathing, eating and rest take up the afternoon and some trading takes place in the late afternoon and evening. But the evening is the time for serious or light discussions among bazaar men, friends, relatives, or just passers-by . . .”⁵⁸

Most shops in China bazaar open between 9 and 10 a.m. (figure 7.2). Of the traders I questioned, trader A's work in the bazaar is the one that is most closely integrated to daily life in the bazaar. Trader A lives with his wife, daughter aged twenty four, and son aged twenty three in a house over the shop in China bazaar. The house was bought by his grandfather, 150 years ago, from an Armenian. He opens his shop at around 9 a.m., and manages on his own until his son and manager arrive at about 11 a.m. Between 11 and 12 a.m., he checks his accounts, and from 12 to 3 p.m., he has his lunch and some rest. Unusually, Trader A is a keen philatelist and numismatic, and between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. he deals in stamps and coins. He described these late afternoon activities to me: “I am purchasing constantly from them the people, . . . they know my time is three to six so that they come here and show the material to me and I just purchase from them, what I just sell to them sometimes and that is the period I just give from three to six.”⁵⁹

In the early evening, Trader A, unlike most of his colleagues who have gone home, goes in to the bazaar:

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001



7.2 Survey plan of Old China Bazaar. Surveyed Easter 2003

“From six to nine you see this is not that I go to the market now from six onwards. I take one hour for the market where I interact with the people who are purchasing the material from me and who are selling the material to me for my paper shop. And I’m selling the material my paper to the people and I just leave there. It may prolong up to eight sometimes, maybe sometimes seven. Then I just come to my home at around seven thirty or eight sometimes. Then I just take my bath and all these things and then sent to us this television, watching television, and by the time I watch the television up to eleven p.m. I do all my research works, writing, even in front of the TV.”⁶⁰

In many ways, Trader A’s relationship with the bazaar combining work and leisure, or the complete mixing of ‘public’ and ‘private’ domains, resonates with Bakhtin’s ideas of the marketplace described in chapter two, and Chakrabarty’s notions of the Indian bazaar, explained previously in this chapter. Nowadays however, Trader A’s relationship with the bazaar is an exception rather than the rule. Today, the ‘norm’ is a much more geographically separate ‘public’ and ‘private’ life. It is these realms that I describe separately next, although I wish to highlight their continued, albeit more limited connections.

Bazaar ‘Private’ Life

Whilst the bazaar seemed to support multiple descriptions and interpretations, a place of ambiguity and uncertainty for the British colonial state, and for some Bengalis (refer to Chapter four), in contrast many traders also stressed the close ‘private’ relations of the bazaar. Trader B’s family business was started by his father around 1950, who came from a village called Karak, in Hariyana. Initially his father got a job in a printing press where he worked for about twelve years before setting up a printing business on his own. In the last fifteen years of his career he set up the paper business, which Trader B took over about twenty years ago. Trader C has worked in the family business for about fifteen years. The business was started by his great-grandfather around 1950 and passed down from his father,

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

who is in semi-retirement, to him. Trader D had worked in the street since 1955, and started his family business himself. (Trader D also rented a shop in the ground floor of Trader A's house.) Trader E's father had started the business in 1956, and he had been involved with it for the last twenty five years. Trader F had just taken over from his father, and business partner, who both had recently died, after starting the business in 1951. Trader F had been with the family business for twenty years. Trader A's father was a jeweller, who died before he could join the family business. Trader A started the family paper business himself.

I have argued previously in this chapter that interactions within the bazaar have to do with overcoming the mistrust of the 'outsider' in a space where transactions are contingent on trust. However, Chakrabarty also highlights how kinship categories are used in the bazaar in this making-familiar of the strange, in this process of taming, as it were, the potentially malevolent 'outsider.' Most commonly men of the bazaar, are 'dada' and 'bhai' to each other, writes Öster, "in the bazaar bhai [literally brother, dada = older brother] expresses a continuing relationship and enjoins a code of conduct."⁶¹ For Öster, "the bazaar represents relationships among men," which are overlapping, multidimensional and reciprocal.⁶² Makers of goods in one direction are suppliers in another, and dealers or agents, in yet another. Traders have clients but are themselves clients in a different direction. He describes these mutual relations as follows:

"The concept of knowing the bazaar expresses the configuration and meaning of bazaar categories and relationships at a given moment. These configurations and indications of events are the hardest thing to learn. A trader must know how prices behave, what is produced where, who does what and how people are related to each other. A trader must know the way bazaars relate to each other, how bazaars are supplied and what to send to whom. Above all a trader must know people and be related to people. A phone call, a message, or even an expectation depends on the relationships among those involved. In order to play the thought of the bazaar a trader has

⁶¹ Öster, *Culture and Power*, p. 135, p. 543

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 102

to be tied to and depend on other people. But this is true of all matters to do with the bazaar. Supplies, whether bound or not, have to do with relations between traders and customers. The extent to which a trader is a part of this system, the position he occupies in it, and his knowledge of it, the ability he has in attracting cultivators, customers and other traders to himself is expressed by the thought of the bazaar in relation to the concept of ability of command.”⁶³

In China bazaar, these close trader relationships can be seen in the often long standing associations with customers and suppliers. Trader C obtains his paper from his distributors, Orient Paper Mills, in Orissa, and another paper mill in Madhya Pradesh. When asked why he uses these paper mills, he stated, “because my forefathers have been working with them, we have set a relation with them, that is why.”⁶⁴ As well as receiving his paper supply from a friend’s family business, Trader A said, “I am getting my goods right from Calcutta of the paper and sometimes from outside of Calcutta.”⁶⁵ He describes the typical business relationship with his suppliers as follows:

“because I am running this paper business from last twenty years, so many friendships have developed with many people who are just dealing directly somebody or directly dealing by from the paper mill and some distributors are there appointed by the paper mills. So they often visit my shop, they quote their price and there are many new avenues for it.”⁶⁶

Trader B states that he receives his goods from, “within a radius of say, fifty kilometres.”⁶⁷

Trader B’s reasons for using certain suppliers, as a sole-trader, were given as follows:

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 126

⁶⁴ Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁶⁵ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

"I am the sole person working, so it is easier for me to be with only a set of suppliers, and they are all locally. So I don't spend much of my time travelling to them, visiting them, so I can interact with them, basically, on an hourly basis if I want to. They are locally, just a phone call away."⁶⁸

Trader C's customers are from Kolkata only. His customers have mostly been passed down to him by his grandfather, and his father, and as he admits, "I have developed a few [customers], but major chunk of my customers are very old."⁶⁹ Trader B's customers come from all over Kolkata and he describes his strong relationship with them:

"Here the business has been developed over a period of time, over a period of years. So they know what to expect from me and I know what to expect from them, so that is how the relationship develops. . . Because, it is basically one to one, they know me, they know me by my face, they know me by my name, they know my house. Even in odd times when they are disturbed, somebody dies, I don't go and trouble them. They know, even in bad times they can come to me, say I, even I, require finance for my personal use we help them out. The entire thing is based on personal relationship."⁷⁰

Trader A claims his customers come from all over Eastern India:

"They are coming from all regions you see. Not from particularly Barabazaar, Barabazaar people are more coming because it is very closer to us but the people even from other regions and even from the suburbans and even from outside the state they are coming to us because there are many states eastern joined states which are in vicinity of this West Bengal like Himachel Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya like that. The people often come here and in Bihar even particularly in that side northern side there is Bihar and

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁷⁰ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

U.P. The people are coming here. The states which are closer to West Bengal they come to us for buying. So it is not particular that we are selling it to the Barabazaar people.”⁷¹

Trader A’s business caters for both wholesale and retail customers, and although they appear to come from far and wide, broadly speaking, he claimed that, “the people from Barabazaar, they come for retailing and the people from outside they come for the wholesale thing.”⁷² Trader A explained the range of his customers and why they choose his shop for their paper in particular:

“My customers are diversified from all walks of, even the, this paper is being used by everybody, even by the poor and even by the rich. So we have diverse interest. But people come to us for buying because of our behaviour and our constant supplies. We keep the material ready for them every time, say if the people do not have the time now to visit your place twice or thrice for each particular thing. Whenever he comes whenever a customer visits our shop he knows that the paper will be available here all the time so he don’t bargain, he just gives the money, exact money, even sometimes the people know my prices fixed. So you know this fixing of the price because the people know that these people don’t bargain, we don’t give the price, hide and seek, there is no question of that. . . We don’t say no to anybody and we know our customers what they require. . . And that is the thing that they never return dissatisfied from us.”⁷³

Trader D is a distributor for a paper mill from Puna with which he has had an association since 1970, and a paper mill from Kerala, as well as dealing in locally made papers. Trader F has imported paper from Commercial Paper Mills, situated 250 km from Bangalore, for the last 12 years, and before that from a mill in Orissa which closed down. His customers come

⁷¹ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

from all over Kolkata. Trader E is an agent for Andra Pradesh Mills in Gujarat. He sells mostly to newspapers such as The Statesman and Telegraph.

What these long-standing business and personal relationships seem to point to are limits to ethnic mixing in the bazaar, highlighting differences within the Marwari community itself. Such evidence seems to question both Bakhtin and Chakrabarty's notion of the bazaar as a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space, and perhaps sets limits on the scope of hybridity theory itself. As an 'outsider,' or migrant in a new place, one had to mix to get to know people. For better or worse, such mixing was often driven by economic necessity, or the need to establish business contacts in order to make a living, but its nature was often highly selective. Such a process, might be limited by family connections that mirrored business associations in the bazaar, associations that continue to this day.

Bazaar 'Public' Life

A further route to 'mixing' in the bazaar came with the social life or 'public' life offered by the bazaar. It is not surprising, given their deep roots in China Bazaar over a long period of time, that all the traders I interviewed professed to know most of the traders in the neighbourhood, on China Bazaar Street, Jackson Lane, and Synagogue Street (figures 7.3 - 7.5). For Trader A the only one who lived and worked in the area, naturally his roots went a little deeper and he described his participation on the local *mohalla* committee:

"I know almost all the people around China Bazaar because every Sunday or on the festival time we interact with each other we have a *mohalla* committee. *Mohalla* means this local inhabitants have a committee which organise the *puja* festivals. So we interact that time also because *pujas* are many here you see these religious *pujas* are here throughout the year in Bengal particularly. The people are very much conscious about their religious *pujas*. So we interact with every this these type of functions and even on the, during this



7.3. Old China Bazaar Street with paper traders. Photographed Easter 2003



7.4. Jackson Lane (now Indra Krishna Karnani Street). Photographed Easter 2003



7.5. Synagogue Street. Photographed August 2000

shopping time we see each other many times. So I know almost the whole people living around my house.”⁷⁴

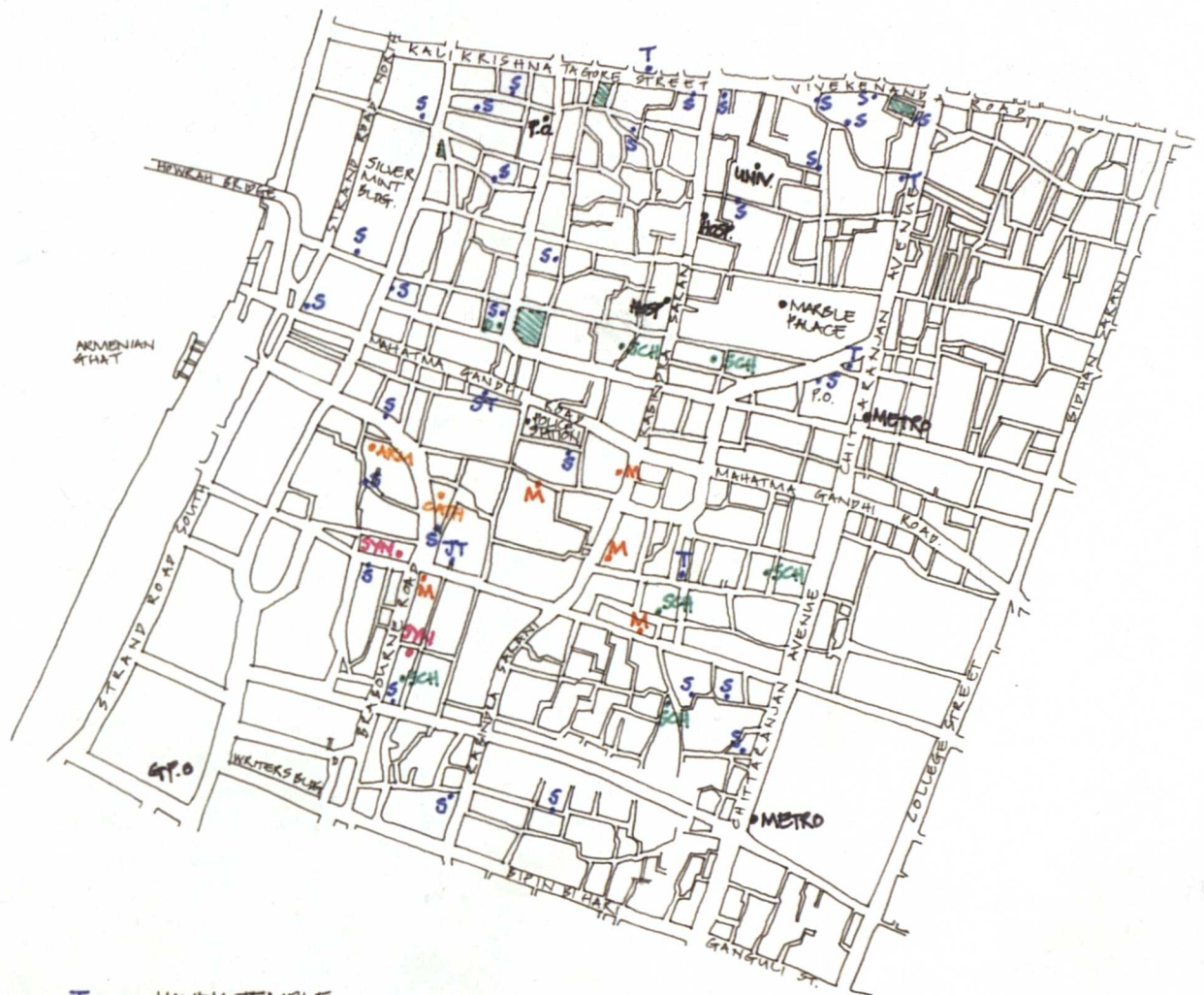
‘Traditional’ social life in the indigenous urban setting was always centred around an external space, or *chowk*. In Barabazaar, the *chowk* is often just a widening of the street perhaps around a significant tree, shrine, or at the junction of two or more streets. The distribution of *chowks*, religious monuments, temples, shrines, and mosques of Barabazaar is shown in figure 7.6. According to Fonseca, “chowks belong to the inhabitants of a group of mohallas.”⁷⁵ Often a mosque or temple is found in the *chowk*. This is the case in China Bazaar where a temple to *Shiva* is found in the *chowk* at the junction of Old China Bazaar Street and Synagogue Street (figures 7.7, 7.8). The range of different places of worship particularly in the area around China Bazaar, gives an indication of the number of different communities that once lived in the area (figures 7.9 - 7.11). Trader A described the cosmopolitan nature of ‘social’ life in Barabazaar today, and how this is embodied in the activities of the *chowk*:

“No neighbourhood committee is here you see and many people from all different walks are here say during the *puja* they celebrate it in all the streets. There is a temple here, Shiva temple and the people just gather there and say when the people from Bihar they are celebrating their own festival, and the people from Rajasthan are celebrating their, so the only place is here the common place is here what you call the courtyard of the, *chowk*, that is called *chowk*, so this is China Bazaar *chowk*, the only place where people can interact with each other. And you see, the thing the good thing is this it is a cosmopolitan Barabazaar. Barabazaar is a cosmopolitan in real sense. Because the people from all the time, say from Bihar or Rajasthan they have their own culture but they are free to celebrate their own festivals, there is no bar at all.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Fonseca, ‘The Walled City of Old Delhi,’ p. 110

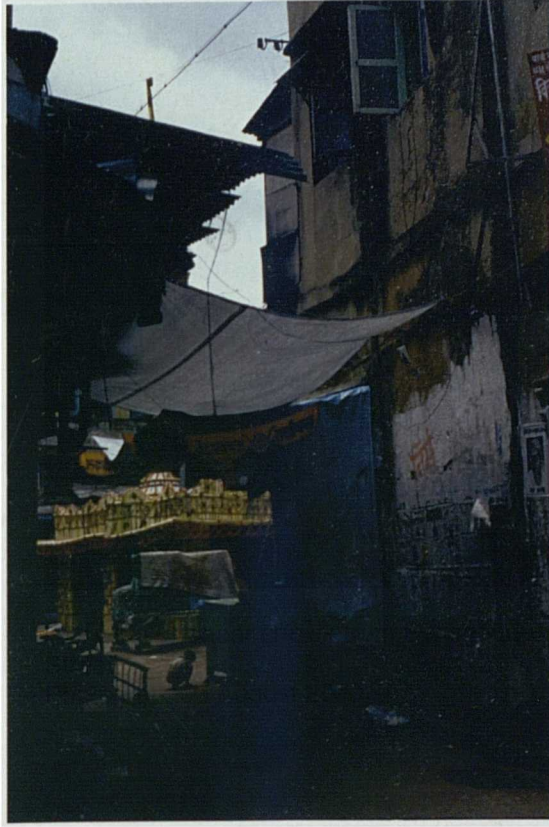
⁷⁶ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001



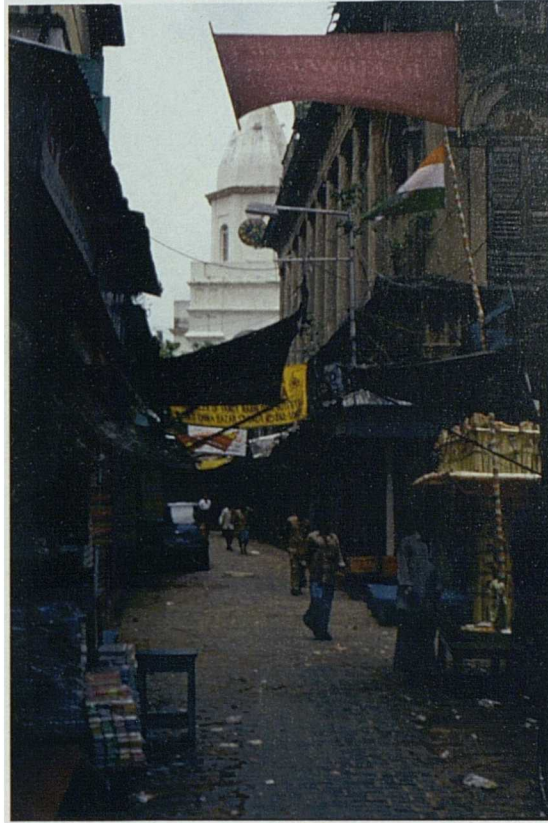
T	HINDU TEMPLE
S	HINDU SHRINE
JT	JAIN TEMPLE
ST	SIKH TEMPLE
SCH	SCHOOL
D	DHARAMSALA
M	MOSQUE
SYN	SYNAGOGUE
CATH	ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL
ARM	ARMENIAN CHURCH



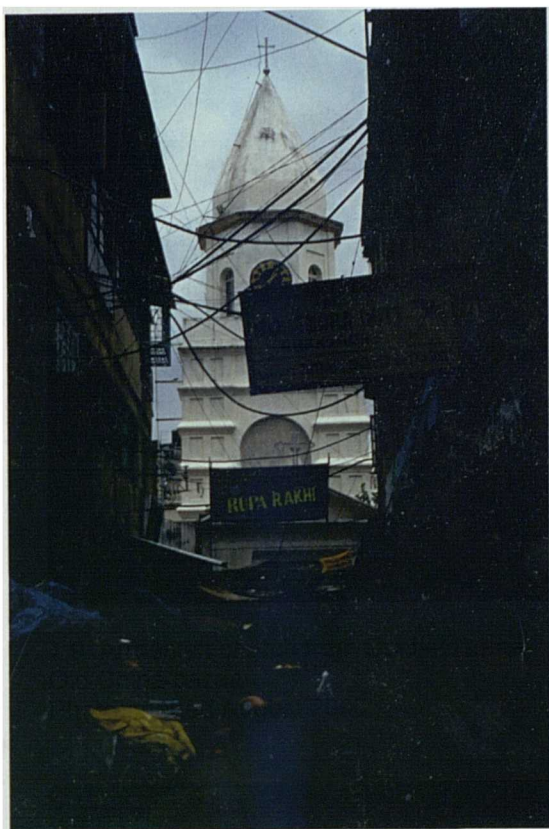
7.6. Survey map of Religious monuments in Barabazaar. Surveyed August 2000



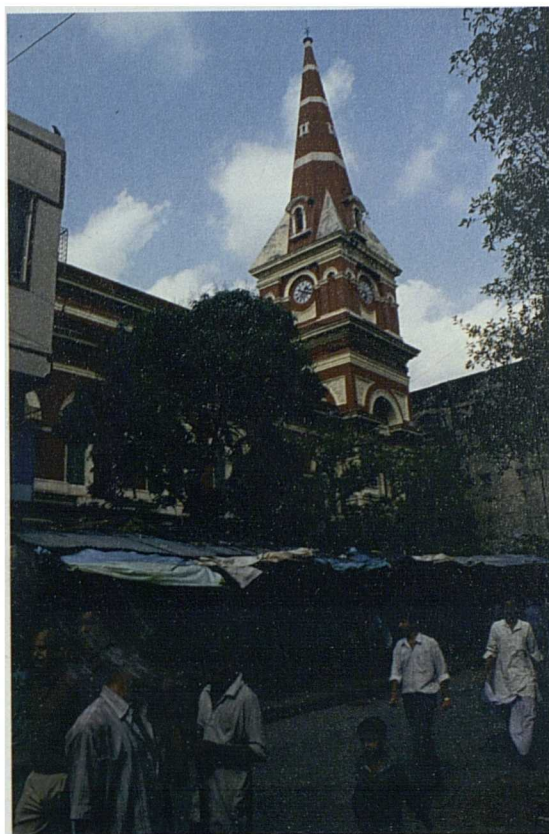
7.7. China Bazaar chowk from Synagogue Street.
Photographed August 2000



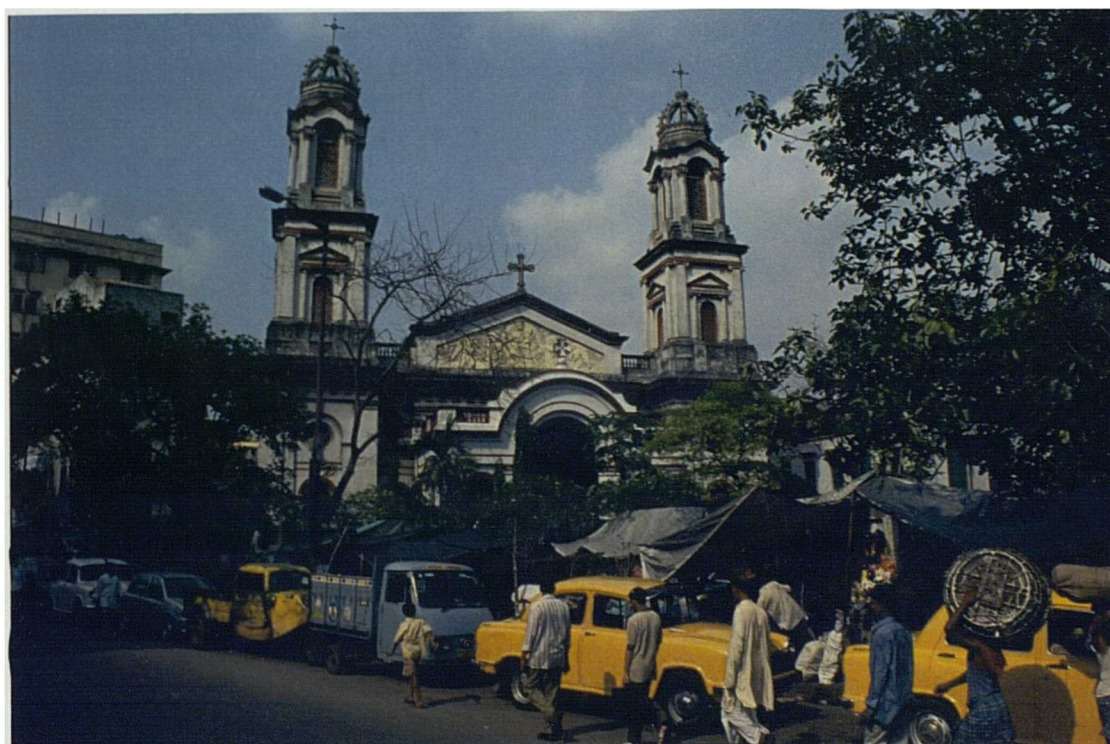
7.8. Old China Bazaar Street, with China Bazaar chowk on right hand side.
Photographed August 2000



7.9. Armenian church from Bonfield Lane,
Old China bazaar.
Photographed August 2000



7.10. Synagogue on Brabourne Road.
Photographed Easter 2003



7.11. Roman Catholic Church on Brabourne Road. Photographed Easter 2003

The change in land use, from residential to service activities, that often happens around major *chowks* may appear as a tea shop, or *pan-bidi* shop, or general merchandise shop, where the daily necessities of life may be purchased. Thus, the chowk tends to serve the immediate community and becomes a focal point where the inhabitants of two or more *mohallas* meet. Fonseca describes how, "chowks at the junctions of streets are often sites for temporary markets, where vendors can lure passers-by with tempting displays of sweetmeats, brightly-coloured cool drinks or cut fruit on ice."⁷⁷ Inevitably, the *chowks* in Barabazaar have become even more commercialised (figure 7.12). Trader C talked about how much the tea and sweet people took in China bazaar chowk, the latter estimated to be about RS 25,000 (£ 425) per day. Trader A described the activities of the tea shop in China Bazaar Chowk:

"I think the people are coming here for their livelihood and even you see the tea shop here, tea stall, they are doing a lot of business here. Because the people are too much here and the people want to take even a sip of tea and they are making too much of money, making too much of the money. That is the problem of Barabazaar."⁷⁸

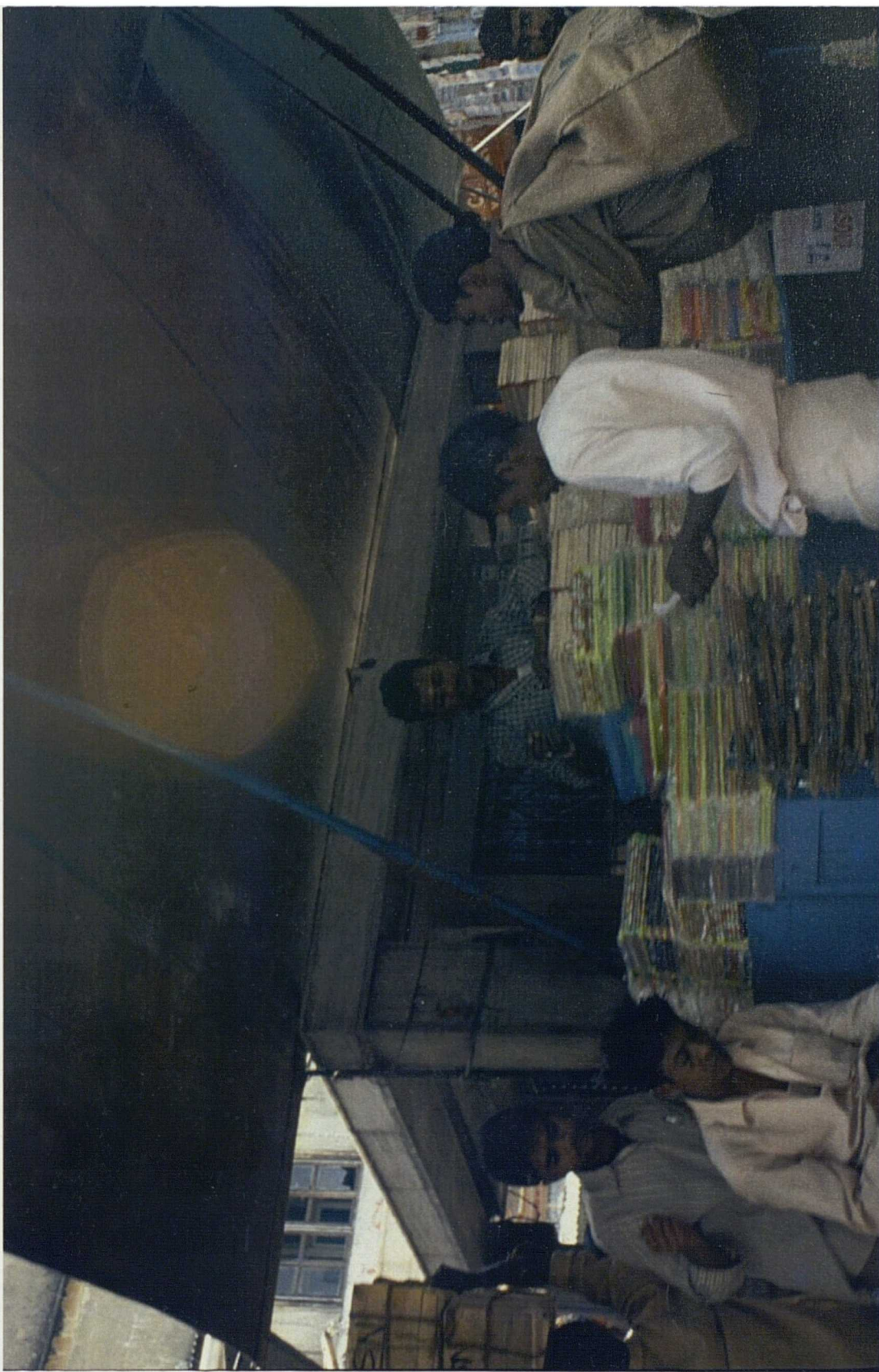
Inevitably with the increased commercialisation of Barabazaar, particularly in the area around Old China Bazaar Street, its function as a social space where one mixed with other communities has diminished. Trader C confirmed that, in the last fifteen years, the social facilities for traders' families had become not as good as in other areas of Kolkata:

"They don't want to keep their residence in Barabazaar, because Barabazaar practically doesn't have any social life. There are no good restaurants in Barabazaar, no good cinema halls in Barabazaar, no good theatres in Barabazaar, no clubs in Barabazaar. So for social life they would like to shift to the south, because nothing has been done for the development of Barabazaar."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Fonseca, 'The Walled City of Old Delhi,' p. 110

⁷⁸ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁷⁹ Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001



7.12. Paper traders at the Shrine, China Bazaar chowk. Photographed Easter 2003

Reflections on Changing Bazaar 'Public' and 'Private' Life

Starting from the first world war, and especially from the 1940s, wealthier Marwaris began to leave their *gaddis* and homes in Barabazaar for more spacious homes in less densely populated localities. Some of them kept their *gaddis* in Barabazaar, whilst others relocated businesses to new offices. The reasons Marwaris left Barabazaar are many. According to Hardgrove, European companies, "were bought out especially by Marwari industrialists from 1946 into the mid 1960s."⁸⁰ Along with changes in industrial control, came increased shifting of residential and office locations. Hardgrove claims that, "many of the palatial mansions owned by Europeans, in Alipur and in Balygunge, were bought up by the elite Marwaris."⁸¹ Hardgrove states that, "one estimate from 1994 is that Marwaris constitute about 15 percent of Calcutta's total metropolitan population."⁸² Sukumar Mitra and Amita Prasad in their article, 'The Marwaris of Calcutta,' give an overview of the Marwari population in Kolkata:

"Today's Marwaris may be broadly divided into three categories. Not all are rich - in fact, the majority are not. Most of them . . . still live in Barabazaar in much the same traditional way. Then there is a fair-sized intermediate group, affluent and well-educated, with abundant worldly ambition but new social and cultural aspirations as well; and finally, a small, exclusive, immensely wealthy and powerful body controlling large interests in trade, industry and finance, and widely involved in national and international politics and culture. These two latter groups have moved out of Barabazaar into other localities: Baliganj, Salt Lake, and at the top of the ladder, Alipur."⁸³

⁸⁰ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 115

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 116

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 10

⁸³ Mitra, Sukumar and Prasad, Amita, 'The Marwaris of Calcutta,' in, *Calcutta the Living City, Volume II, The Present and Future*, Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 109-112, p.112

Naturally, moving out of Barabazaar affected the traders' 'public' and 'private' lives in China Bazaar. However accounts of these changes were decidedly mixed. Trader B broadly summarised the changes as he saw it:

"The local area has changed a lot. Because previously, even we were used to, we were living in Barabazaar. So, basically it was like a, if you put it that way, it was an extended, even an extended part of the extended family. People were very close knitted, bad times good times, they used to share with you. So, everybody used to be there and then the convenience was, my place of business and my residence was the same, so I was not losing any time in my transportation. Now, if I have to come from my house I just think the business is done, I can go even after one hour, basically it was not so. Whenever, but it had a disadvantage also. Those days the business was open for twenty four hours, we had no other activity but to be there and be shop assistants. So, those problems are there, but now as people are leaving, because of the lifestyle changes that is taking place, so they want the house, the family, and the businesses are getting separated. So, now they are moving away from this place and they have a different perception about living, so they come only during the working hours."

Trader A thought that although the owners had changed in the area, the shops had seemingly changed little:

"Paper shops are there only the owners have changed. The shops are there so far as they because owners have changed and I have also worked on this aspect. Many shops here are more than 150 years old. I am keeping the bills and cash memos of those shops particularly from the very beginning I have. I am a collector of that, I am very enthusiastically collecting these things. That whatever, say in this Barabazaar area Raja Bazaar Street for example there were many old shops there and English people were there having their shops

there. So I have particularly the bills and cash memos of those English people also. And then subsequently it all changed hands, some Bengali fellows also took over that shops, and then subsequently it remains standing everything. But the shop and their size and their shape and their wholeness remains the same, only the owners change.”⁸⁴

Many of the pressures on Bengali house owners described in the Chapter Six are echoed by the Marwari China Bazaar paper traders. Like Bengali families, many Marwari families have moved to South Kolkata to avoid the noise, pollution and congestion of Barabazaar. The only one of the paper traders in China Bazaar who still lives there is Trader A. Trader B’s family moved out of Barabazaar in 1964 and now lives in Park Circus, South Kolkata with one of his two sons and his parents. Trader C has never lived in Barabazaar, and now lives in Balyganj in South Kolkata, with his wife, a daughter aged eleven, a son aged seven, a brother and his parents. Trader D previously lived in Old China Bazaar Street, very near to his shop, but now lives in Balyganj. Trader F used to live in Barabazaar but moved to Balyganj too, in 1988. Trader E lives in Howrah. Some houses have been converted to shops and offices and others demolished as new buildings commanding higher rents have been built. Trader A told me of one such courtyard house, 4, Synagogue Street that had been replaced by a multi-storey building. In an area that once had many traders who owned their houses and lived in the area, cheap rented accommodation now pre-dominates.

With increasing commercialisation of the marketplace, particularly in the southern part of Barabazaar where the case studies are located, the ‘traditional’ mixed-use structure of the market place, described in the previous ‘indigenous bazaar geographies’ section, has all but disappeared (the *mohalla* committee is one last remnant of this structure). Trader B explained the process of commercialisation happening in Barabazaar today:

“basically, the residential usage is coming down. . . Now, previously if you go back say about three decades, four decades, or five decades back, people

⁸⁴ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

had their family in the villages, so they were living together in one room, five or six people, or seven people . . . Now, as people have got more educated, the second and the third generations . . . don't want to stay together, this is not suitable because the water is not available, the toilet conditions are not there. So, those who have got educated . . . they are going further off from the main Barabazaar. So, those rooms which are now getting vacant are being used more for commercial purposes, either for offices or for storage, other than living. So, the usage has changed.”⁸⁵

With this increasing commercialisation of the bazaar, and accompanying change in the 'traditional' balance of work and leisure, or 'public' and 'private' life, typically found in the bazaar, there seemed to be correspondingly less mixing amongst individuals and different communities in the bazaar. In an interview with trader D he stated, “nowadays the people have become very narrow minded. Previously they were very broad minded, now they have generally become narrow minded.” When I asked what he meant by this, he replied, “Narrow minded . . . means mixing is less.”⁸⁶ Whether this sentiment is entirely true is difficult to judge. Similar arguments were made about the lack of mixing of British and Indian populations after the Sepoy Mutiny/ Revolt of 1857.

Conclusions: 'Marwaris,' 'Outsiders,' and 'Hawkers'

One of the biggest factors affecting the changing 'private' life in China Bazaar is the impact of large influxes of migrant manual workers from various parts of India seeking work, and petty traders, or 'hawkers,' living in the cheap rented accommodation in the area. Trader A described the change in property relations in China bazaar Street and the typical living conditions for the workers:

“the owners are not living in their own houses, they are just renting it to the people more particularly from Rajasthan and Bihar, these are the two states

⁸⁵ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁸⁶ Trader D, interview with the author, 10 April 2003

which most of the Barabazaar occupiers. . . and it changes every time, say some people are living there for two years say three years, and then some other family comes and they goes out. . . I have seen particularly in my China Bazaar Street that the people are being changed and they are very thickly populated this area is. . . So even in one room many families are living and there is only one common bathroom for the whole building sometimes. Because previously these buildings are made where there was no bathrooms at all, no toilets. So only one toilet is there for say fifty people even sometimes. And moreover the people who are living on the streets the hawkers they used to sleep on the pavements many times, so they also use those toilets.”⁸⁷

Bandyopadhyay describes the Kolkata's markets as consisting of an inner and outer zone, “the official or core market,” and, “a spattering of pavement stalls and humble displays,”⁸⁸ that reflects the hybrid trading arrangements and networks, first developed in the bazaars of nineteenth century Kolkata. In this outer informal sector, the traders are often poor men and women from the villages near Kolkata, sometimes primary producers. The number of hawkers depends largely on the size of the individual market. They often cluster at cross-roads of major thoroughfares, and around bus and rail stations. According to Ray, “the reason for [hawking] is either that the seller is avoiding paying any market charges, or that he cannot find a place inside or that he is only irregular, temporary visitor.”⁸⁹ Nandini Dasgupta, in his article, ‘Linkage, heterogeneity and income determinants in Petty Trading,’ describes the semi-permanent structures of ‘petty traders’: “the shop is often housed in a semi-permanent bamboo or wooden structure occupying public space, or perched on a pallet raised by several piles of bricks and shaded by a cloth or plastic awning or simply jute sacking with goods displayed on it.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁸⁸ Bandyopadhyay, ‘Calcutta’s Markets,’ p. 121

⁸⁹ Ray, Mondira Sinha, *The Municipal Markets of Calcutta Three Case Studies*, PhD Thesis, University of London, 1976, p. 43

⁹⁰ Dasgupta, Nandini, ‘Linkage, Heterogeneity and Income Determinants in Petty Trading: The Case of Calcutta,’ *World Development*, vol. 20, no. 10, 1992, pp. 1443-1461, p. 1445

All of the permanent traders described the increase in the numbers of hawkers, and Trader A spoke for many of the permanent traders, when he said, “everyday they are there this is the change I have seen previously it was very clean and empty roads, but nowadays you see you can see a lot of hawkers there”⁹¹ (figure 7.13). Trader C described the particular problem around China Bazaar:

“If you walk on Brabourne Road, probably you can't walk on the footpath because it's filled with hawkers. . . It's not so bad but still on Synagogue Street also you will find a few hawkers sitting they have encroached from the road. If these hawkers weren't there probably you would get more space to move around, but today it's so bad if you want to walk down China Bazaar, it's very difficult.”⁹²

Trader B summarised the issues surrounding the hawkers:

“Yes, this has become a very major issue, and it is more of a political issue. And the streets vendors and hawkers, because they don't pay taxes, they do not have to pay any tax, it creates a lot of problem and unhealthy competition, for the shop keepers also. Because these street vendors and hawkers, what they have done is, they have obstructed the fascia, basically of the shops, so that prevents the buyers to come into the shops also, and they hawk their goods. Now, a shopkeeper pays taxes, sales tax, income tax, rent as well, and they don't have to pay anything, except for the weekly payment to the police or to the local musclemen. So the, basically it creates lot of social problems, and due to the, there is no political will to look into this.”⁹³

⁹¹ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁹² Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁹³ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001



7.13. 'Hawkers' on Jackson Lane (now Indra Krishna Karnani Street). Photographed Easter 2003

Nowadays, because most of the permanent traders now leave their businesses to go home to their houses in south Kolkata, there was a feeling expressed by some that, particularly at night time, “a vacuum is being created, and the area in the night is being taken over by the manual workers basically, labourers, manual workers and the other vices do take place.”⁹⁴ Many of the manual workers who work as porters transporting goods for businesses around the streets of Barabazaar and the hawkers who compete with the permanent traders, sleep on the pavement, or on their stalls, in order to save more money to send home to their families. As Trader B tellingly puts it, “once, you go out in the night, it is just left to the ‘outsiders’ to do.”⁹⁵ In many ways this echoes the familiar Bengali fears, from 150 years earlier, of the Marwari as ‘outsider’ or ‘stranger,’ that is typical of the place of hybridity. Clearly there is a shift from the Marwari cast as ‘stranger,’ to the hawkers as ‘malevolent outsider.’ The problem is exacerbated by more people moving in to the area looking for work, and rising unemployment. As Trader C asserts, “so when there is unemployment, there is bound to be more of crime, because everyone needs to fill his stomach - if he can’t earn it he’ll steal it.”⁹⁶ Despite the perceived or real increase in crime rate, none of the traders had actually been burgled themselves, but as trader C put it, “we keep hearing, we keep reading on the newspapers that someone has been caught and things of this kind.”⁹⁷

Problems concerning law and order seemingly revolve around the hawkers, and Trader A clarified the often ambiguous legal position of the hawkers:

“So everybody wants to do their business and the hawkers they have been allowed in India you see the Supreme Court the highest court has a verdict that every people have the right to do the business. If they don’t have the place they can do the business on the street but they have to do the business so far as the day is there and when ever they return back to their house they

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁹⁶ Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

should pack it and take it away their business. They don't have to put permanent structures."⁹⁸

Needless to say few hawkers clear away their stalls at the end of the day, which would inevitably mean losing a pitch in a crowded, congested and competitive bazaar. Trader A claimed, "you see this is a harassment every day they lay their goods there and every evening they just remove them, it is not desired by them."⁹⁹ As a result, local criminals exploit the ambiguous legal position of the stalls and offer 'protection' to the hawkers to keep their stalls in the bazaar.

The permanent traders who no longer live in the area, also no longer have a vote or say in the area. Politicians see the hawkers who now live in the area as new 'vote banks.' In some senses, the permanent traders feel like 'outsiders' in their own neighbourhood. According to Trader B it was difficult for the local traders to do anything about them:

"Now, again they have come back, because if you see the elections are there, so they would be allowed to come back, as I told you they are the vote banks, so they vote for a political party. So, if you have the political protection, if you have the protection from the local law and order authority, and from the local musclemen, so that protection is not available to any shop keeper, so he is just helpless, he can not do anything. And then his vote is not there in the area, because he is not residing there."¹⁰⁰

It is this criminal underworld of Barabazaar which exploits the uncertain position of the 'hawkers,' who are today seen as the new 'outsiders,' at least by the Marwari population that I spoke to. Marwaris clearly have little sympathy for the 'hawkers' as 'outsiders,' even though they undoubtedly think of themselves as 'outsiders,' also.

⁹⁸ Trader A, interview with the author, 17 July 2001

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

Despite the settlement of Marwari families for several generations in Barabazaar, to this day Marwaris are continually treated as 'outsiders' in Kolkata. As Hardgrove asserts, "this identity as formed in diasporic trade has led to the production of Marwaris as 'outsiders', even paradoxically in Rajasthan."¹⁰¹ The production of the Marwari as 'stranger' also emerges from everyday practices and humour, such as the constant ethnic jokes made about their miserliness and untrustworthiness. Folk sayings in some areas of India depicted Marwaris as dehumanised vampires: "A thug kills a stranger, a Marwari a friend," and, "If you meet a snake and a Marwari, kill the Marwari."¹⁰² Hardgrove claims that, in Kolkata, "one finds frequent public resistance, contention, and embarrassment about being called a Marwari."¹⁰³ (One comment I heard from a Bengali was that a Marwari will only buy a mosquito net after he has made his first Crore of Rupees.) Though it would be an exaggeration to say that Marwaris and Bengalis live in two separate worlds with no social interaction, the communities do remain quite socially distant despite their physical proximity, especially in the congested parts of Barabazaar. Likewise neither group interacts much with the 'hawkers.' Again, this seems to point to limits to mixing in the bazaar and perhaps limits to hybridity theory itself.

¹⁰¹ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 89

¹⁰² Timberg, *The Marwaris*, p. 103

¹⁰³ Hardgrove, *The Marwaris in Calcutta*, p. 17

CHAPTER 8

HYBRID SPACES: RE-READING BARABAZAAR AND THE CITY

That is best, every age does not bring its own end,

Does not complete its own song;

It leaves behind dissatisfied sighs in the wind.

Rabindranath Tagore, From an inscription on the ceiling of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata

Chapter Summary

Having considered the theory, and examined the empirical work, this conclusion aims to interrogate the main findings of the thesis, making connections between the various chapters. I begin by considering the characteristics of hybridity, as illustrated by my own personal experiences and work on the various chapters of this study. In highlighting the future possibilities for hybridity theory, and echoing the multi-focused comparative nature of this thesis, rather than 'drawing together' the subject as in a 'cause-and-effect' narrative, this chapter provides a number of open-ended conclusions, that point to new hybrid visions. Firstly, I reflect on how history can be represented in a place like Barabazaar, discussing a view of history, borrowed from Dipesh Chakrabarty, called 'provincializing Europe.' Secondly, I outline what sense of place we are left with, particularly underlining Bhabha's notion of 'hybrid communities,' and 'partial' cultures. Thirdly, I re-emphasise the need for hybridity theory to be grounded in place, albeit a place that is impure, ambiguous, and contested. I conclude by reflecting on an architectural research agenda of hybrid urbanism.

Introduction: Main Reflections of the Study

I start the main reflections of this thesis by outlining some of my omissions, or as some may put it opportunities for future research. No thesis about 'hybridity' can ever claim to be comprehensive, representative or even consistent - qualities that all run counter to the notion itself. Inevitably, because of the opportunities afforded to me in Kolkata, and because of the limitations on my time and the space within this study, there were 'stories' in the marketplace that I missed, and would have liked to have pursued.

The first omission in these stories was that of women, although I touched on aspects of their lives in the houses of Barabazaar, in chapters four and six. Inevitably, it was difficult for me as a European man to meet women who lived and/ or worked in the bazaar. Indeed, the only ones I did meet were Mrs. Rohatgi on several occasions, and Trader A's wife once briefly. This was as much a reflection of the seemingly all pervading patriarchal nature of Indian

'culture' as anything else, where it is difficult to arrange for 'unfamiliar' men to meet women out of 'familiar' relationships. In fact, of the relatively few studies written about Barabazaar (admittedly mostly by men), none that I know of have been written about women. The notable exception, which touches on the Marwari women of Barabazaar, is Anne Hardgrove's anthropological study of Marwari women of Kolkata.¹ It is a fault of my thesis, that I can only continue. Without doubt, Barabazaar always was dominated by men - even the migrant Marwari family groups that were concentrated there in the past were predominantly groups of young men. Now that fewer families live in the Bazaar, for reasons outlined in the conclusion to chapter six, inevitably there are still fewer women.

There was also another minority group that I was aware of, who were outside the small areas of the market that I studied, namely the Bengali Muslims of Barabazaar. I am very much aware of the historical gap between Hindu and Muslim Bengalis, which this thesis can not but reproduce. Bhabha reminds us never to forget, "that the nationalist violence between Hindus and the Muslims lies just under the skin of India's secular modernity?"² For more than a hundred years, Muslims have constituted for Hindu chroniclers what one historian once memorably called the "forgotten majority."³ Bengali history has implicitly normalised the 'Hindu.' As Dipesh Chakrabarty states, "I look forward to the day when the default position in narratives of modernity will not sound exclusively or even primarily Hindu."⁴

A final area of study I would undoubtedly have liked to explore further was the burgeoning urban conservation movement in Kolkata, and in Barabazaar in particular. Indeed I started much of the initial research for this section. There are currently 800 heritage buildings in the

¹ Hardgrove, Anne Elizabeth, *Community as Public Culture in Modern India: The Marwaris in Calcutta, c.1897-1997*, PhD in Anthropology and History, University of Michigan, 1999

² Bhabha, Homi K., 'Culture's In Between,' in Bennett, David (ed.), *Multicultural States Rethinking Difference and Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, pp. 29-36, p. 35

³ Broomfield, J. H., 'The Forgotten Majority: The Bengal Muslims and September 1918,' in D. A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968, pp. 196-224, quoted in, Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p. 21

⁴ *ibid.*

city of Kolkata that have been listed by the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC). A first list of 84 buildings of exceptional importance has been compiled by the CMC.⁵

Inevitably, the making of heritage is a political process. Jane M. Jacobs explains this as follows:

“Certain places may be incorporated into sanctioned views of the national heritage while others may be seen as a threat to the national imaginary and are suppressed or obliterated . . . Other oppositional places may be sanitised and depoliticized in their transit into officially sanctioned heritage. Which places do or do not become part of the heritage and what transformations places undergo in this process of recognition is a key arena for combative struggles of identity and power.”⁶

It is not simply that heritage places symbolise certain values and beliefs, but that the very transformations of these places into heritage is a process whereby identity is defined, debated and contested. Heritage is not in any simple sense the reproduction and imposition of dominant values. As Jacobs acknowledges, “it is a dynamic process of creation in which a multiplicity of pasts jostle for the present purpose of being sanctified as heritage.”⁷ The making of heritage would seem to be an area ripe with hybrid possibilities. However this subject must be for another time. Now I wish to explore and interrogate the different characteristics of hybridity as discussed in the various chapters of this study.

Part One: ‘Reading’ Hybrid Spaces

The first part of my thesis, containing chapters two and three, was largely concerned with ‘reading’ hybrid spaces, and looked at conceptual approaches for interpreting the marketplace. In chapter two, I began by analysing the development and evolution of recent

⁵ Refer to website of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation - www.calmanac.org

⁶ Jacobs, Jane M., *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 35

⁷ *ibid.*

notions of hybridity theory, the conceptual map on which this thesis is based. I described concepts of the marketplace through the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Rabelais, who both see the marketplace as a paradigmatic example of hybrid 'outside' space. I concur with Stalybrass and Allon's assertion, expressed previously in chapter two, that Bakhtin essentialises the marketplace as a pure 'outside' space, and attempt to present a more 'mixed' and mobile picture. This chapter goes some way to deconstructing the notion of the marketplace as an archetypal example of hybrid space. I briefly investigated the development of spatiality in hybridity theory, and the relationship of this notion to urbanism. This hybrid sense of place is explored in more detail in the final section of this conclusion 'Hybrid Urbanisms.'

I concluded chapter two, by outlining some of the limitations of hybridity theory. Briefly these were, as follows: firstly, its over concern for language and text; secondly, its difficult and complex theory; thirdly, its lack of engagement with the 'real' world and abandonment of the social and political; fourthly, its ambivalence towards place and history; fifthly, its lack of engagement with political struggles; sixthly and finally, the fear it has generated amongst some critics of a kind of cultural relativity, or encouraging a crossing of limits, beyond which 'anything goes.'

Concerning the first critique, I hope that by balancing a more textual analysis in chapter four and five, with the more material investigations in chapters six and seven, that I have gone some way to answering this criticism. Equally, I do not wish to privilege 'place' over 'text.' It is worth reiterating, as I have argued elsewhere, that places in the city are constructed out of both material and textual landscapes. Regarding the second criticism, I would agree that hybridity theory is at times complex and impenetrable. However, a key contribution of my work as I see it, is setting hybridity theory within particular contexts, in order to gauge how useful it might be, and to give a more grounded understanding of itself. Specifically, I have attempted to highlight formations of 'organic' and 'intentional' hybridity in particular settings, although like Bakhtin and Bhabha, it is the latter category that I am more interested in. I have argued throughout this thesis that hybridity theory offers a particular framework to interpret

the city. This thesis does not pretend to give the final truth on Barabazaar, or on hybridity theory, but rather uses each one as an interpretive reference on the other.

Naturally, I believe that by engaging with specific places in Barabazaar, and attempting to expand the concept of hybridity into the social and political sphere, I have gone some way to answering the third and fourth criticisms. Regarding the fifth criticism, I have tried to highlight contradictory viewpoints where relevant, but did not specifically go out to find overt political resistance to colonialism, or to any other structures of power. In chapter four, I contrasted the alternative viewpoints of Bengali and European modernity, and the intertwined narrative of health. In chapter five, I highlighted the resistance to road widening and slum clearance schemes, portraying Geddes as a figure for this resistance. In chapter six, I emphasised the contradictory notions of 'public' and 'private' space in the Bengali courtyard house. In chapter seven I explored the contradictory ideas of 'outside' space in Barabazaar. The sixth and final criticism begs the question, how do you avoid such an 'anything goes' attitude, or more precisely, are all types of boundaries, borders, categories, and essentialisms, both metaphorical and material, necessarily problematic?

There is no doubt that the fixing and hardening of identification around place has led to certain kinds of racism and xenophobia, a process I describe in chapter one, concerning the racial distinction of 'black' and 'white' towns in eighteenth and nineteenth century Kolkata. However, the urgent need, Werbner contends, "is to distinguish the pernicious essentialising of racism, a reification of categories that does not admit its own contingent ambivalence, from the normal objectifications of ethnicity that foreground cultural identities situationally through dynamic processes of '(pre)figuring' and 'grounding.'" ⁸ Here Werbner draws on anthropological insights, reiterated by Marilyn Strathern, to illuminate the way people 'play' with their identities while still valorising them.⁹ Werbner affirms that, "the pathological ambivalences of racism or xenophobia are the very motors that drive polarising processes forward through a series of agonistic moral panics, towards violent exclusions, assimilations

⁸ Werbner, Pnina, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,' in, Werbner, Pnina and, Modood, Tariq (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, pp. 1-26, p. 18

⁹ Strathern, Marilyn, *Partial Connections*, Rowman and Littlefield, Savage, MD, 1991

and denials.”¹⁰ Against this conflation of racism with ethnicity, we need to acknowledge the difference between a shifting, hybridising politics of cultural multiplicity and racism as a violating, exclusionary process of essentialism, that ultimately seeks to negate ambivalence. The obvious danger we need to guard against is of essentialising all essentialisms as the same, a confusion that as Werbner highlights, “ends up criminalising ethnicity and exonerating racism.”¹¹

In chapter three, I primarily dealt with the fieldwork undertaken in Kolkata, and the various options and reasons behind the decisions to adopt the particular procedures used. Consistent with a qualitative research strategy, I described the ethnographic research approaches that directed me, highlighting the interlinked themes of postmodernity, postcolonialism and hybridity theory and their effects on these approaches. I also showed how Mikhail Bakhtin has influenced ethnography through ‘dialogic’ or ‘polyphonic’ texts. In the second half of this chapter, I explained the fieldwork and its almost autobiographical nature. What is important to realise about the various trips that I made, is how my own personal identity/ position changed, from trip to trip, as the PhD progressed. At first, rather naively, I was the ‘romantic traveller’ in a strange land that is described in the preface, with a belief that these various research techniques, such as participant observation, the use of case studies, and semi-structured interviews, would be useful for my study. As I began to engage with the reality of fieldwork in Barabazaar, I began to question most of these methods. To a certain extent this questioning process was reinforced by the way I worked on the fieldwork, with short intense field trips to Kolkata, followed by longer periods of reflection on the data back in Newcastle. Similarly, in Kolkata, whilst collecting data, I often considered the inadequacy of the theory I had been looking at in Newcastle.

In many ways, the continual shifting of my own personal identity/ position, and the questioning of such basic research methods reinforced my affinity with hybridity theory. I must admit my naiveté again, and say that when I first went to Barabazaar, I expected to see the phenomena of hybrid spaces everywhere in the marketplace. In reality, I learnt that hybridity theory was

¹⁰ Werbner, ‘Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,’ p. 19

¹¹ *ibid.*

more useful in framing a state of mind, reminding me to avoid essentialising ways. Inevitably, it sensitised my approach to the fieldwork process in Barabazaar, focusing some of the questions I asked in interviews. In many of my questions, I was not focused on the 'objects' of the bazaar so much, but on understanding the process of 'change' itself, an approach that is reflected in the content of several of the chapters of this PhD.

In the final field trips, when I felt slightly more informed, and not so much of a 'complete foreigner,' I felt not quite English, but obviously never quite Indian, something more 'in-between.' I learnt that being a 'foreigner' sometimes made it easier for me to mediate and move freely between sometimes conflicting communities in Barabazaar, and helped me get access to people and places that would have been difficult for locals. Similarly, admitting my lack of knowledge made people more trusting towards me. Bakhtin's own ideas on the relationship between theory and practice, through the notion of Janus, clarified my own attitudes to this hybrid space in the field. Deborah Haynes, in, *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*, explains this concept:

"Originally the numina or spirit inhabiting the doorway of a dwelling, the Roman god Janus, like Vesta (with whom he is often associated), was without gender or anthropometric form. As a kind of doorkeeper, Janus looked in - to the hearth and home - and he looked out - toward the larger world. Janus' name preceded all others in rituals of Roman religious life, and calling on him (or Vesta) was synonymous with praying. As the Romans developed more abstract concepts for their deities, Janus became known in cosmic terms as the god of beginnings, the source of all things, the generator of life, the original chaos out of which all things come."¹²

According to Haynes, "art and life, [Bakhtin] said, should answer for each other."¹³ Without recognition of life, art would be mere artifice; without the energy of art, life would be

¹² Haynes, Deborah, *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p.

xiii

¹³ *ibid.*

impoverished. For Bakhtin, Janus looked in two directions, towards art and towards life, trying to make connections between the two. As the spirit of the doorway, Janus might be thought of as the great *and*: art *and* life, theory *and* practice, historical *and* contemporary. The image of Janus echoes Bhabha's notion of the 'intentional hybrid,' and is key to understanding the hybrid space from which this fieldwork and thesis was produced.

Of course, such a shifting mobile personal identity is typical of the hybrid reality that is the 'messy' text. This PhD echoes some aspects of such a framework with its use of multi-focused comparative discourses, open-ended analysis of culture in process, and the recreation of an albeit 'partial' indigenous social world. Some of the main criticisms of 'messy' texts outlined in chapter three overlap with Bhabha's work on hybridity theory. Briefly the critiques of such texts are firstly, its over concern for language and text, and secondly, the sense of crossing limits beyond which 'anything goes.' Naturally, my responses to such critiques in relation to this thesis would be the same as for those I have previously made to critiques of Bhabha's work. However, unlike Bhabha's work 'messy' texts, like this PhD, do engage more directly with specific places, and with the social and political sphere.

Part Two: 'Researching' Hybrid Space

The second part of this thesis, containing chapters four, five, six, and seven, related to largely 'researching' hybrid spaces, and focused on specific places in Barabazaar. For reasons explained in chapter three, it is undeniable that my selection of the sites for these chapters was directed less by a measured process of 'sampling' than by my own idiosyncratic placement in a particular place and time. Questions were put to an emergent object of study, whose contours, sites, and relationships were not known beforehand. I have no qualms in admitting that this PhD represents a partial, provisional and incomplete truth, and rather than taking, in Bakhtinian terms, a monological form is quite deliberately pieced together, although linked back through Bhabha's notion of hybridity theory. I argue throughout, that all discourse is highly contextual, immediate and grounded in the specifics of the situation, and that these are not static sites, but sites in the process of becoming. The hybrid place that is the bazaar is

the scene of many different kinds of exchanges that can be negotiated into a multiplicity of stories. Some of these accounts of course I have not translated here, but that is another story.

These chapters illustrated four different windows or contexts for hybridity theory. What becomes clear when comparing these chapters, is that hybridity as a phenomenon works better in certain contexts than in others. Some sites enable it to flourish, whilst others seem to place a limit on its formation. Hybridity as a phenomenon appeared to work well where Indians and Europeans mixed informally through everyday practices, typical of the marketplace. In India, the process of colonialisation was largely one of gradual appropriation rather than sudden territorial invasion, founded on the incorporation of local knowledge and social structures. Indigenous Indian institutions, practices, bankers, agents and personnel formed the basis upon which the East India Company was established. This situation inevitably encouraged the sorts of processes in which hybridity might flourish, but changed markedly with the Indian Sepoy mutiny/ revolt in 1857. In addition, hybridity becomes more difficult to perceive, where the controlling hand of the state becomes involved; in the case of Barabazaar, where it was exercised through the various health and planning reports of the colonial government, described in chapter four. In this sense, my thesis puts some markers down concerning the success, or otherwise, of hybridity theory in particular contexts.

In chapter four, I showed the supposed polarised context of colonial discourse in the city, through the health and planning reports of Barabazaar. Despite the colonial state's repeated efforts to essentialise the difference between coloniser and colonised, maintained through debates about health and hygiene, they remained categories that continued to baffle. In such a setting, I attempted to demonstrate the persistence of hybridity, and how it manifests itself, in this case, through the indigenous and hybrid forms of an emerging Bengali modernity. Bengalis had an ambivalent relationship with the modern colonial state and the narrative of European modernity, that it represented, which is typical of the place of 'intentional hybridity.'

It is important to remember that these attitudes were not solely attributable to the British colonial state, and that elements of the Indian nationalist movement were also repelled by

what they saw as the predominant aspects of 'outside' space in India, namely, dirt, disease and disorder. The position of some Indian nationalists on this matter is described by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his article, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze,' where he explains Mahatma Gandhi's comments on the 'national character,' that expresses itself on Indian streets.¹⁴ Gandhi is reported to have said,

"We do not hesitate to throw refuse out of our courtyard on to the street; standing on the balcony, we throw out refuse or spit, without pausing to consider whether we are inconveniencing the passer-by . . . In cities, we keep the tap open, and thinking that it is not our water that flows away, we allow it to run waste . . . where so much selfishness exists, how can one expect self-sacrifice?"¹⁵

Chakrabarty continues to explain how the Indian nationalist Nirad C. Chaudhuri, in, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, presents the problem, "in sarcasm mixed with irony, as a cultural puzzle."¹⁶ Chaudhuri describes the everyday routine of refuse collection:

"The streets were regularly watered, swept and even scrubbed. But while the street cleaning ended by about six o'clock in the morning and three in the afternoon, the kitchen maids would begin to deposit the off-scouring exactly at quarter past six and quarter past three. Nothing seemed capable of making either party modify its hours. So little piles of waste food, ashes, and vegetable scraps and peelings lay in individual autonomy near the kerb from one sweeping time to another."¹⁷

The nationalist critique of 'outside' space in India is just one of several competing histories that chapter four highlights. Both Gandhi's and Chaudhuri's comments echo colonial attitudes

¹⁴ Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 7-14, 1992, pp. 541-547

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 541

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Chaudhuri, Nirad C., *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 269, 376, quoted in, Chakrabarty, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze,' p. 541

to health and hygiene and to the 'civilising mission' in India, described in this chapter. However, the nationalists' ideology was not entirely the same as that of the British colonial state, concerning the potentially 'malevolent' aspects of 'outside' space in India. The nationalists' project was to convert the colonial state into a modern Indian State. Chaudhuri is acutely aware that British rule only 'conferred' subjecthood on Indians but withheld citizenship. Both Gandhi and Chaudhuri call for a new civic consciousness: keeping the roads clean, turning taps off in the 'public' interest. In many ways, these conflicts that lie at the heart of the Nationalist position, reflect the ambivalence of the hybrid space. Notwithstanding these important differences, both the imperialist and nationalist reactions have one element in common. They both seek to make the street and the bazaar, regulated 'official' places, clean and healthy, incapable of producing disease or disorder.

Bhabha provides some answers as to why the phenomenon of hybridity should be present in such a seemingly hostile colonial place. Bhabha is concerned with colonialism's own vulnerability to itself, and in particular is interested in a radical deconstruction of the Self/Other binary. He proposes that the rules of recognition contained within the notions of Self and Other, upon which colonial power was built, do not produce a clear command of authority over difference, or even a successful repression of difference. As Jane M. Jacobs, in *Edge of Empire*, explains,

Rather, these constructs always produce an excess, something which always slips outside the binary order. This uncontainable surplus establishes the very basis for the disallowance of colonialism's own authority, and this ambivalence establishes the necessity of colonialism's anxious repetition of the stereotypes which 'allow' (but also always defer) mastery.¹⁸

For Bhabha, the colonizer and the colonial subject both undergo a splitting of their identity positions, a splitting that occurs through their mutual imaginary identification (pictured in terms

¹⁸ Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 26

of mimicry).¹⁹ It is with this sense of mimicry that nineteenth century Bengalis adopted a more hybrid view of everyday life that mixed European and indigenous manners, described in chapter six. Equally the Nationalists adoption of colonial views of 'outside' space remains a mimicry of a certain 'modern' subject. While Bhabha's notion of mimicry proposes a colonial absorption of agency, his concept of hybridity attempts to return it to the colonised. Rather than mimesis providing proof of the realisation of the civilising intent of colonisation, it establishes a partial and distorted representation which menaces the colonizer more than it comforts. It is this sense of ambivalence that one sees in comments made by Clemow and Hossak in chapter four, in their Barabazaar health report, where they mention the cleanliness of the Brahmin home.

In chapter five, I described an alternative approach to health and hygiene from that of the colonial establishment, namely the more hybrid visions that Sir Patrick Geddes proposed for Barabazaar. In this context, hybridity theory offers some reflections on the contradictory interpretations Geddes' report appeared to receive. The ambivalent reception of Geddes' report on Barra Bazaar echoes some of Bhabha's own interpretations of the arrival and subsequent translation of the English Bible in India, described in chapter two. Whilst the Bible in its 'original' context was a symbol of colonial authority, Geddes' report arguably written from a more 'hybrid' space similarly could not command authority in its colonial setting. His report on Barra Bazaar reminds us of the doubling process of hybridity; specifically, the fusing and merging of cultures - in Geddes' case, of his own European approaches to city planning with more indigenous ones; with the dynamic undermining of a dominant cultural view - highlighted by the reception it received. It is worth re-emphasising that it is this second part of the process of hybridity that Bhabha, and Bakhtin before him, see as the most significant reason for pursuing hybridity theory as a key language of understanding. Geddes' work in India in general, and his report on Barra Bazaar in particular, represents a key example of how this theoretical phenomenon works in practice.

¹⁹ For a more detailed explanation of Bhabha's notion of mimicry, refer to: 'Of Mimicry and Man The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,' in, Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp. 85-92

Indeed Geddes' hybrid approach seems to have become more relevant for the contemporary practitioner in Barabazaar. In the 1990's, using Geddes' work as their inspirational model, the Foundation for the Conservation of Rural and Urban Traditional Architecture (CRUTA) were commissioned by Building Technical Services, a department of Calcutta Municipal Corporation to complete a report on North Calcutta, titled *Barra Bazaar Improvement: A Manual Towards Civic Action*.²⁰ The report looked at the historical background of the area, the socio-economic profile and made various recommendations.²¹ CRUTA succeeded in getting the Bengali High Court to list Raja Binaya Krishna Deb's palace, in the north of Calcutta. They restored water pumps, litter boxes and street lights in an area north of the city centre, and completed a restoration of Satyanarayan Temple, in Barra Bazaar. At the same time the local Rotary Club planted trees, under the motto, "Making Calcutta Green Again." CRUTA's conservation report on Barabazaar represents the final translation of Geddes' work, so far.

Chapter six addressed a Bengali rather than colonial context, and a more overtly hybrid setting than those of previous chapters. In this chapter, I looked at the past and present day hybrid sense of place, generally found in middle-class Bengali courtyard homes. Here, I show how a hybrid social reality, developed in the nineteenth century, has affected the organisation, and architecture of the courtyard houses of Barabazaar. In these houses one clearly sees an evolving and hybrid architectural language, demonstrated particularly in the Deb house at Shobhabazaar, but also in my own later case studies. There is a sense with these houses that something neither wholly Indian, nor wholly English, was produced. Like Geddes' report on Barabazaar produced from a similar hybrid space, these houses were criticised from both Bengali, and colonial sides. Again we see the doubling process of hybridity, namely the fusing and merging of Bengali and European architectural languages typical of 'organic' hybridity, with the undermining and unsettling of cultural views, typical of 'intentional' hybridity. It is difficult to say whether the people who owned these houses adopted hybrid ways out of a sense of cross-cultural idealism, or out of pure economic necessity, or whether their intentions were a mixture of both.

²⁰ CRUTA Foundation, *Barra Bazaar Improvement: A Manual Towards Civic Action*, 1995

²¹ These included traffic improvements; area development schemes, in particular the area around Satyanarayan Park; improvements to the river frontage; and identified model lanes for improvements.

This chapter also looks at past and present notions of 'public' and 'private' life. Returning to themes of modernity, previously described in chapter four and five, I examine how the changing relationship of 'public' and 'private' life in the marketplace developed, and continues to develop, in association with a hybrid sense of modernity. Modernity is a theme that runs through most of this thesis, first arising in Europe, spreading by way of European imperial expansion to countries like India. Dipesh Chakrabarty states that, "the phenomenon of 'political modernity' - namely, the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise - is impossible to *think* of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe."²² Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the universal individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on, all bear the burden of European thought and history. In India, modern social critiques of caste, oppressions of women, the lack of rights for labouring and subaltern classes, as well as the critique of colonialism itself, are unthinkable except as a legacy, partially, of how Enlightenment Europe was appropriated in the subcontinent.

Without doubt, British rule put in place the practices, institutions, and discourse of bourgeois individualism in Indian, albeit skewed towards the colonial government. Mostly and not surprisingly, it was the Bengalis who dealt with the colonial state, particularly those described in chapter six, who were most affected by this narrative. Chakrabarty claims that, "early expressions . . . of this desire to be a 'legal subject' make it clear that to Indians in the 1830s and 1840s to be a 'modern individual' was to become a 'European.'"²³ Chakrabarty continues, stating that,

"Many of the public and private rituals of modern individualism became visible in India in the nineteenth century. One sees this for instance, in the sudden

²² Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p. 4

²³ Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?', *Representations*, vol. 37, Winter, 1992, pp. 1-26, p.7,8

flourishing in this period of the four basic genres that help express the modern self: the novel, the biography, the autobiography and history. Along with these came modern industry, technology, medicine, a quasibourgeois (though colonial) legal system supported by a state that nationalism was to take over and make its own.”²⁴

I concluded this chapter by explaining how these processes of modernity have continued to the present day. The increased commercialisation of Barabazaar, and its effect on the architecture, social and religious rituals of these courtyard houses, highlights a changing and contradictory distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ life, and a Bengali modernity that is still being negotiated in Barabazaar today.

Chapter seven looked at how ‘outsiders,’ or ‘strangers,’ appear to embody the qualities of hybridity found in the marketplace, specifically through the example of the Marwari population of Barabazaar. Again, like the Bengali community that incorporated colonial ways into their everyday lives, the development of nineteenth century Marwari culture followed a similar pattern of ‘organic’ hybridisation, albeit more specifically affected by new and emerging trading networks. This hybrid and changing social reality affected the social life and geographies of the bazaar, a changing social reality that continues to this day. In similar ways to how I described the Bengali community in chapter six, I concluded this chapter by explaining the processes of modernity that have affected Marwaris. Likewise, the increased commercialisation of Barabazaar, leading to large influxes of migrant manual workers and petty traders or ‘hawkers,’ highlights a changing and contradictory distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ life, and a Marwari modernity that is still being negotiated in Barabazaar today.

In many senses, this chapter highlights a particular context that points to as many limitations in hybridity theory, as there are possibilities. On the one hand, Barabazaar is characterised as a site of multiple descriptions and interpretations, a place of ambiguity for the British colonial state and for some Bengalis, typical of the place of hybridity. However, in contrast, in

²⁴ *ibid.*

Barabazaar, also there was the need for close familiar and often economic relationships, highlighting a particular limit of hybridity in the marketplace. The lack of mixing between Bengali, Marwari, and 'hawker' communities emphasised further constraints in the notion of hybridity.

Future Hybrid Visions

It is worth re-stating that the main ways hybridity shows up in this thesis are reflected in the key objectives of this study mentioned in chapter one, and which parallel the chapters of this thesis as follows:

- The construction of a largely colonial 'urban history of Kolkata,' and the formation of an intertwined 'hybrid' narrative of health and modernity
- The 'hybrid' vision that Sir Patrick Geddes adopted for proposals for Barabazaar in 1919
- The 'hybrid' sense of space found in the courtyard houses of Barabazaar
- The culture of the street and the bazaar as a paradigmatic example of 'hybrid' outside space

Naturally, I believe that this thesis begins to fill the research gap identified in chapter one, specifically understanding the relevance of hybridity theory for architecture and cities. In the next section, I attempt to build on these hybrid narratives and outline the multi-focused hybrid sense of place we are left with. Put more straight forwardly, what are the possibilities and limitations for hybridity theory in re-reading areas other than Barabazaar, and cities other than Kolkata? In a PhD that focuses on both textual and material landscapes of the city, naturally this sense of place encompasses both perspectives. In a thesis that looks partly to the colonial past, I begin with reflecting on how the more discursive area of history can be related in a place like Barabazaar. In a PhD that is also set in the postcolonial present, I then consider the more representational realities of hybrid communities, partial cultures, and hybrid spaces, before pointing towards an architectural research agenda of hybrid urbanism.

Writing 'Other' Histories

As I mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, one of the key problems of Kolkata's urban literature is the uncritical acceptance of British sources and the recirculation of the colonisers' ideas about the city and its people. This literature included the maps and reports from health and planning committees, mentioned in chapter four, which cemented the characteristics of the native population, as representing a chaotic landscape that constantly threatened British efforts to order and control. As I argued at the beginning of this thesis, in most of the pertinent literature, these colonial sources are not interrogated for their motivation or point of view. Not only were the complex choices and decisions made by the British simplified into a British winning strategy, the enormous contribution and resistance of the native population during the entire duration of colonial rule is effectively subdued as part of the city's history. How then is it possible, to read histories of areas like Barabazaar without resorting to the mistakes of the past? Indeed, how might the 'developing world' write its own history?

Gyan Prakash begins his article, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World,' by stating that, "how the 'third world writes its own history' appears, at first glance, to be exceedingly naive."²⁵ The question would seem extremely relevant to this thesis, grounded as it is in the history of Barabazaar. Such a question could re-affirm the East-West and Orient-Occident oppositions that have often shaped historical writings. According to Prakash, "in apparently privileging the writings of historians with developing world origins, this formulation renders such scholars into 'native informants' whose discourse is opened up for further disquisitions on how 'they' think of 'their history.'"²⁶ For Prakash, "the notion of the third world writing its own history seems to reek of essentialism."²⁷ Notwithstanding these reservations, he has offered some answers to his question, with his proposals for 'a post-Orientalist Indian historiography,' which, "visualises modern India . . . in relationships and processes that have

²⁵ Prakash, Gyan, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 32, no.2, April 1990, pp. 383-408, p. 383

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

constructed contingent and unstable identities.”²⁸ For Prakash, the emerging historiography, “can be located at the point where poststructuralist, Marxist, and feminist theories converge and intersect.”²⁹ Thus, according to Prakash, “the representation of India as an other defined by certain essences - tradition, spirituality, femininity, other worldliness, caste, nationality - becomes a site of contest.”³⁰ Prakash asserts, “in these contests, the maintenance and the subversion of the relations of domination discursively reproduced by the lack of a clear break from the legacies of Orientalism, nationalism, and the ideologies of modernization are at issue.”³¹ The power attributed to the knowledge about the past makes historical writing into a political practice and turns the recent post-Orientalist historical accounts into contemporary acts.

As an adjunct to this proposal, he also questions how one might dislodge the “Western tradition,”³² of history, a theme that has been pursued by Dipesh Chakrabarty, that Chakrabarty calls, ‘provincializing Europe.’³³ Chakrabarty defines this notion broadly as a, “project [that] must ground itself in a radical critique and transcendence of liberalism (i.e., of the bureaucratic constructions of citizenship, the modern state, and bourgeois privacy that classical political philosophy has produced), a ground that late Marx shares with certain moments in both poststructuralist thought and feminist philosophy.”³⁴ Chakrabarty in his article, ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?’, points out that, ‘Indian’ history has largely been in a position of subalternity, because ‘Europe’ has always worked as a silent referent. Whilst Chakrabarty’s definitions of ‘Europe’ and ‘India’ as, “opposites paired in a structure of domination and subordination,”³⁵ appear to essentialise the debate, he qualifies his analysis by stating that, “just as the phenomenon of Orientalism does not disappear simply because some of us have now attained a critical awareness of it, similarly a certain version of ‘Europe,’ reified and celebrated in the phenomenal world of

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 400

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 402

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 407

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ Refer to: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001

³⁴ Chakrabarty, ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History,’ p. 20

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.1

everyday relationships of power as the scene of the birth of the modern, continues to dominate the discourse of history.”³⁶

Chakrabarty points out that ‘we’ all do ‘European’ history often, myself included, using archives that are themselves relics of an imperial past. He describes the painful difficulties of writing ‘non-western’, ‘third-world’ histories, as follows:

“Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. . . ‘They’ produce their work in relative ignorance of non-western histories, and this does not seem to affect the quality of their work. This is a gesture, however that ‘we’ cannot return. We cannot even afford an equality or symmetry of ignorance at this level without the risk of appearing ‘old-fashioned’ or ‘outdated’.”³⁷

Chakrabarty calls this state of affairs a, “problem of asymmetric ignorance”, but despite these misgivings, he admits, “the everyday paradox of third-world social science is that we find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of ‘us’, eminently useful in understanding our societies.”³⁸

Chakrabarty is keen to explain that he does not call for a simplistic, out-of-hand rejection of modernity, and grand narratives. For Chakrabarty, the point is, not that Enlightenment rationalism is always unreasonable in itself, but rather, a matter of documenting the historical processes through which, “‘reason’, which was not always self-evident to everyone, has been made to look ‘obvious’ far beyond the ground where it originated.”³⁹ It is this process, that Bhabha illustrates, when the bible is introduced to the vegetarian ‘natives,’ and they ask of Anund Messeh, ‘How can the word of God come from the flesh eating mouths of the English?’ (refer to chapter two). It should be clear that, the project of ‘provincializing Europe’ is not a project about discarding European thought. According to Chakrabarty, “European thought is

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 3

³⁹ *ibid.*

at once indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought - which is now everybody's heritage and which affects us all - may be renewed from and for the margins."⁴⁰

Nor is the project of 'provincializing Europe' a call for cultural relativism or for atavistic, nativist histories. Controversially, in Chakrabarty's work is the understanding that developing world nationalisms, as modernising ideologies, at least in India, have themselves been partners in the process of imperialism. For Chakrabarty, the introduction of the modern state, that accompanied European imperialism, with its attendant discourse of 'citizenship,' was a double edged sword. On the one hand, "the claims of (bourgeois) equality, of citizens' rights, of self-determination through a sovereign state have in many circumstances empowered marginal social groups in their struggles is undeniable," however on the other hand, "what effectively is played down, however, in histories that either explicitly or implicitly celebrate the advent of the modern state and the idea of citizenship is the repression and violence that are as instrumental in the victory of the modern."⁴¹

Chakrabarty claims that it is, "this connection between violence and idealism that lies at the heart of the process by which the narratives of citizenship and modernity come to find a natural home in 'history'."⁴² What he asks for is, "a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in the collusion with the narratives of citizenship in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity."⁴³ Of course, the legacy of colonialism does not only surface amongst the ancestors of the colonisers, it can also surface in those of the colonized.

As I mentioned in chapter one, the writing of history must acknowledge other possibilities, including the contradictions and biases which undermine the idea of a linear narrative of

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.16

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.20

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 22

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 23

progress, and which instead open up a view of history as disjointed and discontinuous. When interpreting an area like Barabazaar in a former colonial city like Kolkata, rather than emphasising the duality of poles, such as the 'black' and 'white' towns, I wish to argue that their critical aspects lie in the uncertainty and ambiguity of such extremes. In sketching out the important elements of 'other' urban histories of a city like Kolkata, one should include hybrid Bengali notions of health and modernity, the hybrid sense of place found in the middle-class Bengali courtyard houses, and the voices of 'outsiders,' like those of Marwaris. Arguably one should also include figures like Sir Patrick Geddes, which reflects Chakrabarty's call that 'other' histories do not only come from 'native' sources.

Finally, of course, 'Europe' cannot be 'provincialized,' from within the institutional site of the university. As Chakrabarty reminds 'us,' "the globality of academia is not independent of the globality that the European modern has created."⁴⁴ Universities, their critical distance notwithstanding, are part of the battery of institutions complicit in the process of, "the deep collusion between 'history' and the modernizing narrative(s) of citizenship, bourgeois public and private, and the nation state."⁴⁵ Chakrabarty concludes by stating:

"To attempt to provincialize this 'Europe' is to see the modern as inevitably contested, to write over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship other narratives of human connections that draw sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor by the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates. There are of course no (infra) structural sites where such dreams could lodge themselves. Yet they will recur so long as the themes of citizenship and the nation state dominate our narratives of historical transition, for these dreams are what the modern represses in order to be."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 20

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 19

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23

I do not wish to suggest some kind of unmanageable entanglement in the situation I now find myself working. I just wish to point out that the 'other' histories of this thesis, and the conclusions I reach in this chapter, do not necessarily wholly counter a 'western' tradition of history. Neither, do I wish to deny the possibility of alternative views of history, but instead suggest that this thesis is one articulation of many that goes some way to unsettling the predominant view.

Hybrid Communities, and 'Partial' Cultures

As I have explained elsewhere, hybridity theory is regarded by some as a way of analysing cultural interaction as well as a potential antidote to essentialism. This colonial essentialism was described in chapter one concerning the racial distinctions made between the 'black' and 'white' towns in eighteenth and nineteenth century Kolkata. How then is it possible to form communities that avoid such obvious social and political failings? Indeed, might hybridity theory provide models for such communities?

Werbner acknowledges that, "from a postmodern perspective, it might seem self-evident that essentialising ideological movements need to be countered by building cross-cultural and multi-ethnic alliances."⁴⁷ Arguably hybrids not only raise consciousness; they are performatively powerful, polluting, fertilising or purifying. Hybridity has opened up some opportunities for individual self-fulfilment and emancipation. Against the old modernist, organising state, unable to live with strangers, Werbner states, "the present efflorescence of cultural and subcultural differences has made difference the very organising principle of postmodern existence."⁴⁸ Despite such potential positive benefits, and as I have outlined previously in this chapter, many critics have questioned Bhabha's commitment to the social and political sphere. However, he has attempted to expand hybridity into this sphere with a model of society that he terms 'hybrid communities,' derived in part from Bakhtin's notion of the 'intentional hybrid.'

⁴⁷ Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,' p. 3

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 17

Bhabha claims such a community creates, “agency through incommensurable (not simply multiple) positions”.⁴⁹

“Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy: the outside of the inside: the part in the whole.”⁵⁰

This would suggest that such, ‘visions of hybrid community,’ remain contested and challenged, agonistic, divisive and divided - between, as David Bennet puts it, “subordinate and dominant, ‘minority’ and ‘majority’?”⁵¹ For some this view is somewhat paradoxical, even utopian - for, how can there be a community of incommensurable positions? However, Bhabha argues that, “‘conflicting interests forming temporary strategic alliances’ - is a good popular front tactic that has been part of many movements for revolutionary social transformation, as well as other more social or liberal ‘democratic’ reforms.”⁵² According to Bhabha, “the difficult *non-utopian* thought that one has to think: what structures and strategies of praxis, organisation, interpellation, coalition can be held, painfully and paradoxically, ‘in common’ between antagonistic political philosophies in the performative and practice-bound realm . . .”⁵³ Nevertheless and despite Bhabha’s claims, David Bennet believes that, “if this concept is to have an affective value greater than that simply of ‘force-field’ say, then it would seem to imply a ‘second-order’ or ‘higher-level’ solidarity, a level at which the ‘incommensurable’ resolves into commonality.”⁵⁴ However, it would be interesting to see how the political ‘bosses’ and ‘cadres,’ described earlier in this chapter, would fit into such a, ‘vision of community.’ Perhaps, as Doreen Massey intimates in what she refers to as a,

⁴⁹ Bhabha, ‘How Newness Enters the World,’ in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp. 212-235, p. 231

⁵⁰ Bhabha, ‘Culture’s In Between,’ p. 34

⁵¹ Bennet, David, and Bhabha, Homi K., ‘Liberalism and Minority Culture Reflections on ‘Culture’s In Between’,’ in Bennett, David (ed.), *Multicultural States Rethinking Difference and Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, pp. 37-47, p. 40

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.41

“progressive sense of place,” such a vision of hybridity could surely only flourish within a more even, more democratic, terrain of power than that which characterises the present.⁵⁵

For Bhabha, these hybrid communities consist of what he calls, ‘partial’ cultures. Bhabha borrows an insight from T. S. Elliot’s, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), “where Elliot demonstrates a certain incommensurability, a necessary impossibility, in *thinking* culture.”⁵⁶ Although written in the main about settler societies, Elliot writes, “the people have taken with them only a part of the total culture . . . The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture.”⁵⁷ Bhabha defines this partial culture as, “the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures - at once the impossibility of culture’s containedness and the boundary between.”⁵⁸ In, “the discourse of minorities, spoken for and against in the multicultural wars,” Bhabha, “proposes a social subject constituted through cultural hybridisation, the over determination of communal or group differences, the articulation of baffling likeness and banal divergence.”⁵⁹ For Bhabha, the partial, minority culture, “emphasises the internal differentiations, the ‘foreign bodies,’ in the midst of the nation - the interstices of its uneven and unequal development, which gives the lie to its *self-containedness*.”⁶⁰ The Marwaris of Barabazaar are an example of this *partial* culture. Further echoes of this *partial* culture in the marketplace can be seen in the changes of family life and local neighbourhoods in Barabazaar explored in chapter six.

Not surprisingly, there are difficulties and uncertainties in using hybridity theory as a model of society. Cross-cultural or gendered politics, the politics of anti-racism or of transversal alliances, turn out to be fraught with the very same sorts of difficulties that generate the contemporary dual forces of hybridity and essentialism in the first place. Rather than being open and subject to fusion, identities often seem to resist hybridisation. The result, Nira Yuval-Davis argues, is that the creation of new oppositional alliances aiming to transcend

⁵⁵ Massey, Doreen, ‘Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place,’ in, J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds.), *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Changes*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 59-69, quoted in, Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 163

⁵⁶ Elliot, T. S., *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1949, p.62, quoted in, Bhabha, Homi K., ‘Culture’s In Between,’ in Bennett, *Multicultural States*, p. 29

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Bhabha, ‘Culture’s In Between,’ p. 30

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 33

differences must contend with the resistance of activists to a fusing of their identities and subject positions.⁶¹ Yuval-Davis argues that, "one tendency of multiculturalism has been to exaggerate cultural 'difference', and thus valorise 'fundamentalist' cultural self-definitions among minorities."⁶²

Hybrid Urbanisms

This thesis has sought to bring together Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity with particular places in a 'traditional' market area in Kolkata, called Barabazaar. However, I would wish to distance myself from the essentialising view, that a 'traditional' market area like Barabazaar, is in any way an 'authentic,' 'pure,' or 'real' space. Instead, I have consistently tried to argue that the multiple histories of places like Barabazaar highlight more hybrid visions. Critics like Dell Upton echo this sentiment stating, "we should turn our attention away from a search for the authentic, the characteristic, the enduring, and the pure, and immerse ourselves in the active, evanescent, and the impure, seeking settings that are ambiguous, multiple, often contested, and examining points of contact and transformation - in the market, at the edge, in the new and the decaying."⁶³ It is equally important to remember that space and place are not, and never were, especially in Barabazaar, entirely local phenomena and need to be reconsidered in the context of contemporary 'flows' of people, goods, and information. This situation has always been the case for Barabazaar, once affected by the 'modernising' colonial network of trade, described in chapters six and seven, now needing to be considered in the often uncertain context of circumstances like globalisation.

According to Jane M. Jacobs in, 'Tradition is (not) modern: deterritorializing globalization,' "globalization marks an extension and intensification of a set of processes established in

⁶¹ Yuval-Davis, Nira, 'Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism,' in, Werbner, Pnina and, Modood, Tariq (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1997, pp. 193-208

⁶² Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,' in Werbner, and Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, p. 21

⁶³ Upton, Dell, 'The Tradition of Change,' *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Fall 1993, p.9

modernity.”⁶⁴ Considering the effects of globalisation would seem relevant to this thesis situated as it is, partly in the postcolonial present. These processes have resulted in a distinctive reconfiguration of the associations between ‘place’ and ‘tradition’ understood to characterise a ‘premodern world.’ Jacobs asserts that in the premodern world, “it is assumed that there was a ‘natural’ relationship between everyday lived culture and geographical territory or place - a pre-given or natural order of things embedded in, and confirmed by, one’s locality.”⁶⁵ Jacobs argues that modernity, “delivers us away from this embedded mode of dwelling, and injects us into a more disembedded and rationalized, and individuated being in the world.”⁶⁶

The everyday specifics of such globalisation are played out more obviously, in the admittedly contradictory views, expressed by the Barabazaar paper traders, further questioning the idea of the marketplace as the paradigm of everything that is ‘traditional’ in India. For trader C the future of his paper business was bleak and he was already thinking of opening a travel agency. Initially he would work from his office in Barabazaar, but then open a branch in Balyganj serving Alipur, where he thought most of his market would be. He was ambivalent about his only son taking over the paper business, saying, “sons do not want to follow into the footsteps of the fathers, but with growing education, they would like, if he wants to change his line, wants to become a professional, I won’t mind.”⁶⁷ Trader B was concerned that when import duties (currently at sixty three per cent), were relaxed, Indian paper traders would not be able to compete, both in terms of price and quality, with imports from Europe and America. Equally, Indian paper was not of sufficient quality to be exported to any potential new markets in Europe and America. Trader B did not see his sons following him into the family business. One of his sons was a software consultant with KPMG, an accounting firm in the USA. His second son was studying in Calcutta, and as Trader B put it, “frankly, you would put it, I would not allow him to come, and do all this hassle all time, but it all depends on the almighty.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Jacobs, Jane M., ‘Tradition is (not) modern: deterritorializing globalization,’ in, *The End of Tradition?*, Nezar AlSayyad (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2004, pp. 29-44, p. 30

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Trader C, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

⁶⁸ Trader B, interview with the author, 24 July 2001

It would be easy to assume from such conversations, that due to globalisation, the idea of Barabazaar as the 'traditional' marketplace, is at an end. Of course, this assumption coincides with an awareness of new intensities of differentiation into which the idea of tradition becomes re-written. One tendency of globalisation has been to exaggerate cultural difference and thus valorise fundamentalist cultural self-definitions among minorities. As Jacobs asserts,

"rather than doing away with tradition, globalisation has delivered new conditions for its emergence; installed new mechanisms for its transference; and brought into being new political imperatives for its performance. Under globalisation, tradition has been reshaped and enlivened in a range of unexpected ways."⁶⁹

Urbanism will always continue to be an arena where one can observe the specificity of local cultures and their attempts to mediate global domination. While the material reality of 'tradition' as an authentic expression of an isolated and culturally homogeneous group may be in doubt, it is still useful in identifying instances of difference and resistance, and the development of competing subject positions, respectively. According to Nezar AlSayyad in, *The End of Tradition*, "the local remains the stage for the drama of identity to be played out; however assumptions regarding the actors themselves have become increasingly problematic."⁷⁰ So it would seem that what has ended, is not tradition itself, but the idea of tradition as a harbinger of authenticity, and as a container of specific cultural meaning, to be reconfigured as partial and provisional truth.

In chapter two, I briefly outlined the relationship of hybridity theory to more urban issues, citing marketplaces, borders zones, and ethnically mixed neighbourhoods as ultimate 'third' spaces. However, some critics have questioned this arguably idealised 'third' space. Katherine Mitchell has rightly noted that third spaces can also be reactionary and oppressive. She has suggested that much more careful attention be paid to, "the actual geographies of

⁶⁹ Jacobs, 'Tradition is (not) modern,' p. 32

⁷⁰ AlSayyad, *The End of Tradition?*, p. 11

capital accumulation in which these spaces are produced.”⁷¹ As I explained in chapter two, critics like Aijaz Ahmad argue that hybridity fails to move beyond the ephemeral and the contingent, masking long-term social and political continuities and transformations. Ahmad finds that the conditions of ethical responsibility, moral action and committed positioning are the subjective foundations of any (oppositional) politics that wants to effect real change. Gillian Rose has argued that, “the proliferation of disruptions, subversions, instabilities, undecidabilities,”⁷² in Bhabha’s work, insisting on the failure of the powerful from within, is worryingly optimistic. For Rose, discourses of the powerful, “have not so far subverted themselves away.”⁷³ Indeed, do colonial cities like Kolkata afford a glorious liminality within which to imagine postcolonialism? Rose has noted that the idea of hybridity provides a “disembodied” and “unbloodied” view of colonialism.⁷⁴ Similarly, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s view, debating hybridity and the margins diverts us from problems at the centre. To paraphrase Spivak, this evocation of hybridity is, “so macrological that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power”.⁷⁵ Put very simply, does the emphasis on hybridity detract from questions of power?

Aspects of the politics and power in Barabazaar, indeed the oppression and corruption that is part of present day Barabazaar, were presented by two Kolkata architects, Participants W and X.⁷⁶ According to Participant W there is, “some sort of boss in the neighbourhood,” who “represents” a political party.⁷⁷ In Barabazaar, the BJP, Congress-I, and CPM parties are all ‘represented,’ and the relative power of the ‘boss’ varies according to which party is in power. Participant W described the murky nature of these ‘bosses’:

⁷¹ Mitchell, Katherine, ‘Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 15, 1997, p. 551, quoted in, Roy, Ananya, ‘“The Reverse Side of the World”: Identity, Space, Power,’ in, AlSayyed, Nezar, *Hybrid Urbanism On the Identity discourse and the Built Environment*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, USA, London, 2001, pp. 229-245, p. 237

⁷² Rose, Gillian, ‘The Interstitial Perspective: A Review Essay on Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 13, 1995, pp. 365-373, p. 371

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Rose, ‘The Interstitial Perspective,’ p. 233

⁷⁵ Spivak, 1993, p.74

⁷⁶ Participants X and W, interview with the author, 11 August 2000, and 22 August 2000

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 22 August 2000

"over the period of time, due to their proximity to the corridors of power, due to their proximity to the influential people, the political leaders, they have gained some sort of - you can say they influence people. And secondly, lots of their activities are supposed to be not so legal, not so civilised activities. General people tend to shy a little. So they have naturally gained this status of a don."⁷⁸

According to Participant W everybody knows 'the boss' because, "he has seen him growing in that locality from his childhood."⁷⁹ Because of all the business and money in Barabazaar, there were a lot of these 'bosses,' especially when compared to other areas of Calcutta, and you had to be careful of who you did and did not offend.⁸⁰ Each 'boss' would employ a host of 'cadres' to carry out the extortion, and it was these people you saw on the streets and in the *chowks* playing cards, and often belonging to 'clubs'. Participant X explains:

"Yes, on the street. They are the people. They don't have work. They work for the party. So they identify themselves through the clubs. Like they name their club UR Club, Young Peoples Club, something like that. And that group will identify through that name. Like this is a man from that club. So this sort of grouping they do, and these groups are being utilised by the political parties. It is everywhere in India. But in Calcutta it is more."⁸¹

Ananya Roy further questions the power and privilege of those engaging with hybridity, asking, "who has the power to be thus hybrid? To speak in a hybridised voice? To woo an audience thus? What is the world-geography of these speaking-positions?"⁸² Writing about the border, she says,

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Participant X mentioned how for the police Barabazaar was a plum posting. Often police officers would bribe their supervisors to post them there, because they could take much money to turn a blind eye. Participants X and W, interview with the author, 11 August 2000

⁸¹ Participants X and W, interview with the author, 22 August 2000

⁸² Roy, Ananya, "The Reverse Side of the World' Identity, Space, Power,' in, *Hybrid Urbanism On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, Nezar AlSayyid (ed.), Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, USA, London, 2001, pp. 229-245, p. 242

“If identity is a process, involving moments of essentialised fixity, then who gets to be a hybrid? Who has the power to be hybrid? Who has the ability to articulate a hybrid identity as a social and political category, and when and under what conditions is this possible? For whom is the border a limitless frontier, and for whom is it an international boundary, heavily policed and regulated?”⁸³

As well as reinforcing the need to locate the hybrid in ‘real’ places, such interrogations of privilege lead one to remember the need for constant reflexivity, and ask what concept of hybrid urbanism are we then left with? Such a notion would need to reflect some of the shifting perspectives of place that this study negotiates, namely: the material and textual landscapes of the city; official and unofficial discourse; geographies of the past and present; and, differing cultural narratives. Reflecting this hybrid reality, this concept would also embody the framework of a ‘messy’ text, specifically: the open-ended analysis of culture in process; the use of multi-focused comparative discourses; and the re-creation of an albeit ‘partial’ indigenous social world. Whilst questioning the nature of boundaries, borders, and categories, such an idea would also need to acknowledge the difference between a shifting, hybridising politics of cultural multiplicity and a violating exclusionary process of essentialism. In short, it would have to offer a clear distinction between the narratives of the powerful and the oppressed. Such an urbanism would have to acknowledge hybrid communities, emphasising the ‘foreign bodies’ that make up partial cultures.

Furthermore, such an urbanism like the accounts presented of the sites from this PhD, and their politics of production would be necessarily ‘dialogical’ or ‘poly-vocal’, rather than ‘univocal.’ Unlike colonial accounts before it, that have constructed history for their own purpose, omitting the everyday histories and experiences of ordinary people, such an urbanism would attempt to use a more ‘mobile’ approach to the nature of identity and difference in considering the relationship between identity and place. Such an approach

⁸³ibid., p. 238

would unsettle the belief in a bounded, pre-given essence of place to which the identity of those who dwell there adheres. It would attend instead to the constant interplay between positional and variable histories, highlighting competing images, as well as the complex intermeshing of the global and the local. Such an account would note what Edward Said refers to as the, "overlapping territories," and, "intertwined histories," which produce the unstable conditions of dwelling in place.⁸⁴ Together this urbanism would mark a geography in which centre and margin, Self and Other, here and there are in anxious negotiation - where there is displacement, interaction and contest.⁸⁵

Ananya Roy gives a useful working definition of such an urbanism, as follows: "If one thinks of cultural hybridity as an open-ended process, congealing in moments of essentialised fixity, then one can also think of hybrid places as fluid spaces with nodes of articulation, the spatio-temporal points at which the pure and authentic are distilled from amidst cultural corruptions."⁸⁶ Such a notion echoes the artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña's model of society as a *menudo chowder*, that he stages in his performances and texts, and which is used by Bhabha to explain his notion of hybridity. Bhabha argues that their potency is not based on their capacity to hold all the earlier parts together, or fuse together all the divergent sources of identity, but is found in the way they hold differences together. Quoting Gomez-Peña, Bhabha refers to the multicultural melting pot which, "has been replaced by a model more germane to the times, that of the *menudo chowder*. According to this model, most of the ingredients do melt, but some stubborn chunks are condemned merely to float".⁸⁷ Of course, such a concept of hybrid urbanism must also take the social and political arena seriously.

Conclusions: Towards an Architectural Research Agenda of Hybrid Urbanism

As I stated in the introduction to this study understanding the 'spatiality' of hybridity would seem an important consideration in a thesis that analyses architecture and the city, and a research gap that I identified as needing filling. One of the questions this PhD raises is

⁸⁴ Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993, p. 56

⁸⁵ Clifford, J., 'Travelling Cultures,' in, L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, pp. 96-111, p. 101

⁸⁶ Roy, Ananya, 'The Reverse Side of the World', p. 240

⁸⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 218, 219

whether hybridity theory is relevant to only contexts like Barabazaar and former colonial cities like Kolkata? Indeed, how might hybridity theory be useful in understanding past and present architectures and cities other than Kolkata, even in cities like Newcastle here in the United Kingdom?

Barabazaar was chosen as an empirical focus for this thesis, because it seemed an appropriate cross-cultural 'laboratory' to test Bhabha's ideas on cultural hybridity. There is little doubt that certain areas of cities in this country, as well as other parts of the world, whilst very different, are as ethnically mixed as Barabazaar, and could provide interesting focuses for further comparative hybrid studies of cultural interaction. How many in London, or in other cities around the world, can speak of being from any one culture in any singular sense? As Kwame Anthony Appiah puts it: "if there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures it is surely that we are already contaminated by each other."⁸⁸ Of course, Appiah's observation that the ex-colonizer and ex-colonized are already contaminated by each other, does not necessarily imply an equality of experience.

The essentialised and largely mono-cultural urban histories of cities and architectures in this country may well benefit from the antidote of hybridity theory, revealing the more complex multiple cultural identities, contradictions, and disruptions, integral to the hybrid historical process. What are the ways in which British cities and their architectures have been affected by our colonial pasts, in a postcolonial present? Such an analysis would borrow from the conclusions of this study: highlighting 'other' urban histories of the city; the 'foreign bodies' that make up 'hybrid communities' and 'partial' cultures; and emphasise a 'mobile' approach to the nature of identity and space. It may also incorporate the methodologies of a 'messy' text. Such studies may provide answers to questions posed by urban conservation movements in this country and elsewhere, about which buildings to conserve, or more specifically, in a setting of complex ethnic and cultural origins, whose identity do you preserve?

⁸⁸ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Cultures*, New York, 1992, quoted in, Prasad, Sunand, 'Architectural Hints of a Postcolonial London,' Architectural Association of London, *AA Files*, 49, pp. 25-34, p. 26

What then is the territory in which contemporary hybrid architectures of the 'postcolonial city' might emerge? Should buildings in a multicultural city like London clearly reflect something of 'other' non-European cultures. Referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty's view of history called, 'Provincializing Europe,' and described earlier, how might architects' 'provincialise' a dominant narrative of architecture in this country, without rejecting modernity, or resorting to cultural relativism, or nativistic histories?

In this study, Geddes' hybrid approaches in particular, have provided some practitioners in Kolkata with some initial starting points for such a process, which is referred to earlier. Sunand Prasad in his article, 'Architectural Hints of a Postcolonial London,' writes that despite, "belonging to a multicultural, postcolonial metropolis, only a mosque here or temple there might hint at any plurality of architectural vision."⁸⁹ Prasad continues to describe what the, "postcolonial condition," means at the, "coalface of architectural practice and production," in this country, today, highlighting three distinct areas of influence, namely: "practice; programme; product."⁹⁰ Prasad states,

"The first concerns the nature of the development process itself and how it may deal with the issues of racial disadvantage, some of which have come to be addressed under the banner of inclusion. The second caters for new cultural needs or an agenda of cultural diversity. The third concerns the form of the building and whether a new architecture can be willed into being."⁹¹

An obvious target for hybrid investigations in this country would be the past and present histories of architectures of immigrant communities. Is there a hybrid house form for Bengali immigrants in this country, that is equivalent to the Bengali courtyard houses of Barabazaar, described in chapter six? Prasad highlights a guide to the design of housing for minority ethnic social and religious groups called, *Accommodating Diversity: House Design in a Multi-*

⁸⁹ Prasad, Sunand, 'Architectural Hints of a Postcolonial London,' Architectural Association of London, *AA Files*, 49, pp. 25-34, p. 25

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 26

⁹¹ *ibid.*

Cultural Society (1993 & 1998), which includes, “examples of schemes that [have] expressly tried to devise a new domestic architecture in response to client groups non-English origins.”⁹² In addition, Prasad acknowledges that, “the many hundreds of mosques, gurdwaras, and temples that have been built across the UK constitute a distinct and so far barely studied architectural corpus that could provide many insights into how communities reproduce the imagery and accommodation needs of an essential aspect of culture.”⁹³ In particular, Prasad cites as examples of, “notable essays in hybrid architecture”: London Central Mosque in Regents Park (1978) by Sir Frederick Gibberd and Partners; Ismaili Centre in South Kensington (1983) by Casson Conder Partnership; and the more architecturally conservative, Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden (1995).⁹⁴ Furthermore, how might Indian marketplace settings in this country compare to Barabazaar? In this regard, one thinks of Jane M. Jacobs’ study of the Bengali community’s influence on developments in Spitalfields market, London, described in her book, *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*.⁹⁵

However, it is worth remembering that such hybrid spaces should not be idealised, and as mentioned earlier can equally be reactionary and oppressive spaces for certain groups of people. Hybrid people do not always create hybrid places, and hybrid places do not always accommodate hybrid people. Nezar AlSayyad states in, *The End of Tradition?* that, “the assumption that hybrid environments simply accommodate or encourage pluralistic tendencies or multicultural practices should be turned on its head.”⁹⁶ Equally, I do not want to suggest that such spaces are somehow forever linked back to narratives of power and privilege, and to essentialising practices. Rather, I wish to point out that they may be one, albeit problematic, way of unsettling an essentialising architectural discourse and highlighting the multiple identities and more mobile sense of place that is more typical of the world we live in today. For AlSayyad, “all that can be hoped for at the beginning of the twenty first century then are environments that harbour the potential for growth and change, and for people who

⁹² Penoyre and Prasad, *Accommodating Diversity: House Design in a Multi-Cultural Society*, National Housing Federation, London, 1993, and 1998, quoted in Prasad, Sunand, ‘Architectural Hints of a Postcolonial London,’ p. 28

⁹³ Prasad, Sunand, ‘Architectural Hints of a Postcolonial London,’ p. 27

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Jacobs, *Edge of Empire Postcolonialism and the City*

⁹⁶ AlSayyad, *The End of Tradition?*, p. 11

may find the possibility of adapting and adopting otherness as a legitimate form of self-identification."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

AFTERWORD

Some Thoughts on an Ethics of Dialogue

This PhD started as something of a personal affair, and it is on a more personal note that I finish. In the preface, I stated that Kolkata had been a 'turning point' for me, and my architectural career. As I reach the so-called 'end' of this process, I find it necessary to reflect on what this thesis means for me now, indeed how this thesis itself might be a 'critical moment' at the beginning of my own architectural research career. I also declared that with this sort of work collaboration may be the way forward, and that a certain 'generosity of spirit,' and tolerance for the 'others' motives is required on both sides. Of course, what such thoughts may point towards is the development of an 'ethics of dialogue,' albeit one located in an ambivalent hybrid 'in-between' space.

Above all, modest ambitions are necessary for this dialogue. Admittedly like most PhD students, I was over ambitious with my subject, imagining somehow that this thesis would solve all of architecture's problems, at least as I saw them. Of course, this was absurd. Nevertheless, I also felt the need to take risks with what is precious and particular to me personally. It is very tempting in dialogue to opt for a safe zone of generalities. It is important to recognise the significance of parallels and differences. The acceptance of difference and assertion of similarities may seem contradictory, but such anomalies are characteristic of the hybrid space.

This approach to dialogue is exploratory and experimental rather than definitive. Dialogue in such a hybrid context becomes fluid, fluent, and dynamic - truly, 'dialogic' in the Bakhtinian sense. Sometimes this process works, other times it is less successful, often it is seemingly wasteful. Despite the ambiguity and uncertainty of one's position, it requires commitment and much patience to cope with the inevitable frustrations that come along. In the process of dialogue, one must be prepared to exchange and reject ideas, if they are to illuminate. It is in the process of seeking understanding that we find enlightenment, not in declaring it.

Much of this approach to dialogue is reflected in the 'processes and networks' that I developed as part of the methodology for this study. It is worth re-emphasising that first and foremost my research was an exercise in building trust and friendship. Like friendships, such dialogues, must be tested continually if they are to grow to their full potential. I never again saw or heard from the friend that I waited five weeks for in a Kolkata hospital, that is mentioned in the preface. However, I made many friendships with people in Kolkata, friendships that continue to grow and develop to this day.

This process of research was informal, unpredictable, and piece-meal, and often involved much negotiation. In reality, as with all dialogues, my presence sometimes raised suspicion and there were many raised expectations that were later dashed, leaving me feeling exposed and insecure. At the beginning of any dialogue, I would admit my lack of knowledge of the subject, which had the effect of making people more trusting towards me, often letting down their defences. Conscious as I was of the relative privilege of my position, admitting a lack of knowledge paradoxically also brought to the fore my own vulnerability, and lack of power.

In the preface to this study, I talked about myself as the 'romantic traveller,' then later in the thesis I referred to myself as the 'complete foreigner.' Now at the 'end' of this process, I identify a little more directly with Kolkata and Barabazaar. However, I still feel like Bakhtin's figure of Janus looking back and forth, writing from a hybrid 'in-between' space. It is similar to looking through a window at the end of night-time, to a scene beyond that is Barabazaar, gradually lightening as the sun rises. Of course, looking through a window, one is always peering through one's own reflection - a reflection that begins to disappear, as the scene beyond emerges, but never quite completely.

APPENDICES

1. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Courtyard House Owners

Transcript of an interview with Mr. Samarendra Krishna Daw and Nephew

N. C. Daw and Co., 9, B. B. D. Bag (east), Calcutta, 700 001

23 July 2001

Preliminary comments:

I interviewed Mr. Daw at his shop in B. B. D. Bag, with his nephew who also worked there. On reflection, I was a little disappointed with the way the interview went. Despite some interesting insights, I felt it was all a bit superficial - I suppose not all interviews can be penetrating and insightful. Mr. Daw is probably one of the more conservative people I have met in Barabazaar and not surprisingly seemed to emphasise how little had changed. After the interview, I wished I had asked his nephew more questions. I'm sure I would have got different answers and a much different perspective on change in Barabazaar. Also, I began to wonder if the extended family encouraged the status quo.

MB. So you own the house - Yes? What will happen to the house when you die?

SD. Actually this house belongs to my great grandfather. He died in the year 1901, 16 June. Right, 1901, 16 June. My great grandfather died on that premises, and after that the grandfather become the owner of that building. When my grandfather expired, my uncle being the head of the family, Binoy(?) Krishna Daw, along with the four brothers is staying over there in that building. In the meantime, we have to construct the building in a modern way and what that period, of the very short period, we have shifted to another building, a temporary. When the building is being completed at the Jorasanko house, we again came back to that building, with the manner that we are staying over there permanently. And now it is a very methodical, the family is going to be expanded, the family members have decided we have no space to live over there, so we have to arrange some other building. My uncle, youngest uncle, has said with another building, new building, near our house. My other uncle shifted to S? Das Lane. We the member with the family with my father, and my, another uncle is staying over there with their family. The two brothers are staying in that building. That you have visited.

Nephew. Another two brothers have shifted elsewhere.

MB. Right.

SD. Now, we are with the members, my son, my grandson, my granddaughter, staying over there. We are two brothers, and the one brother is my younger brother, I am the eldest one. My nephew is here. My nephew is here, and my sons are there. We are all staying over there, and the family member, say about twenty or twenty five over there.

MB. Right, you've answered a lot of questions there. So, how long has your family lived there?

SD. How long?

MB. Yes, when did you family move there, originally - your great grandfather presumably went, when?

SD. My great grandfather staying over there permanently, he built that house.

MB. Yes, When did he?

SD. Yes, say, I think so, it's a very old record, 1823, say about.

Nephew. 1825, 25, no?

SD. No, 1820 or 21, something like that, that period, my great grandfather built that. Because you know the shop, the firm is being established by him.

MB. Yes, yes.

SD. My great grandfather, in the year 1835. So a few years ago they have their home building at Jorasanko in 1818 or 20 something like that, that period. From the structure we have vehemently examined 60 inches (?) - the mud. You know the word, word for the soil. There is no cement, yes, no lime, nothing and only part structure is going over there with the 60 inches pillar. Main wall! Now we are three figures broken up the nowadays, there is two rooms come out from that structure.

Nephew. Wall itself is so thick, break it up, maybe one room will come out of it.

MB. OK. You said there are about twenty five family members.

SD. My unit. Myself and my younger brother. Twenty five member all together staying over there.

MB. When I went last time there were some courts at the back.

SD. Yes courtyards, right. That is for the ceremony purpose.

MB. There were some other smaller courtyards behind, two or three of them.

SD. Yes, they are another member, they are also in number 35 or 42, say about another 40 members.

MB. All of your family?

SD. All of our family, cousins, brothers, they are staying over there, his grandchildren, grandchild, all are staying with the head of the family.

MB. And presumably they do all sorts of jobs, they have all different kinds of work?

SD. Jobs.

Nephew. Same kind.

SD. Same type jobs, ammunition trade. Nobody is going to give the service to the other people, government employment, nothing. Their trading is arms and ammunition for time immemorial.

MB. Right, all of those.

SD. Yes, all.

Nephew. They've got different shops in different places, in India.

MB. Different shops all over?

SD. We have other shops say about in (?), in Burdwan, you know Burdwan?

MB. Yes.

SD. And another is at (?), and shops at Cuttack, Orrissa. They're all, gun shops are there.

MB. Right. And do you think that the growth of the nuclear family has affected your . ?

SD. Family, what?

Nephew. The nuclear family.

SD. Nuclear family will be started after my death. Right you are.

MB. Do you have other family residents living in Barabazaar not in your house, but?

SD. Actually my family residents, my other cousin-brothers they live out of this building in another building, and they are also split up. They are four brothers. Two brothers, one brother at (?) at the extreme south, another yes at Ballyganj, and another two brothers at Jorasanko.

MB. And the last time I came and saw you, there was another, you took me to another house, down the lane.

SD. Yes, there is another house, that is my Uncle's house. How many members? They are also a very big family, eight, no six daughters, and eight sons, four still living, and four expired.

MB. And are they in the arms trade as well.

SD. Yes, arms trade, all of them.

MB. And all the ones living in Ballyganj?

SD. Yes.

Nephew. All of them.

MB. There's too many, I was going to ask you about your children but there sounds, what about your children, how many children do you have?

SD. I have two sons.

MB. Two sons, how old are they?

SD. And my younger brother, two daughters and one son.

MB. Right, OK.

SD. And my eldest son is having one son, one daughter.

Nephew. My cousin, eldest cousin.

MB. And how old are your sons, they must be?

SD. No, my son is staying over there with me.

MB. Yes, how old?

SD. He 40 or 42.

MB. And could you describe a typical day in your house.

Nephew. Routine.

MB. Routine, yes.

SD. Actually, we have a time for this, say about 6.30. And there we have to walk out and then say after about 10.30, the breakfast going on 8.00, 8.00 am. Then after that breakfast we have 10.30 or 10.00, 10.00 to 10.30 we have a (?). After that we come out for the office, then in the office to finish at 9.00. Say at 9.30 to 10.00 we have our dinner over there. So this is our habituation, the system of our day.

MB. OK, you must have servants or domestic helpers that help you. Do these people live in the house?

SD. Yes, we have.

Nephew. Four people.

SD. No, more than four people.

Nephew. There are four persons.

MB. Right, and they are living in the house?

Nephew. Yes, they are living in the house.

MB. We were just saying there is about three or four servants and they live in the house. And has the, I remember when I spoke to you last time you were talking about, it's getting more difficult to get servants to help now.

SD. Yes.

MB. Has the number decreased?

SD. No, no, the number is not going to be decreased, but the number is stationary.

MB. So it is fairly stable. The actual architecture of the house.

SD. Architectural designing our house?

MB. What is your attitude? Do you like your house?

SD. Right, now, that is being engineer of the foreign, British engineer. They have come out with the engineering plan and everything, the structural design, the wrought iron, you have seen that.

MB. Yes.

SD. The wrought iron in the area, that is when your worship is going on the courtyard. And after that there is another floor that we have to assemble on that floor, and the next part of the building the residential purpose. So three part that is being divided. It's right?

MB. Yes, yes. So do you think that, I mean a lot of houses like yours in North Calcutta have been divided up or demolished and new buildings put up.

SD. No, no question. We are not going to demolish the house, the structure is staying, but I have now the high time to demolish this thing, because we want some space out of that building.

MB. The courtyards that you have, how are they used?

SD. The courtyards are being used as a, not as a playground, but for the airy purpose, the sun rays and that will be there. Because the residents will be made as such a manner, there, no question of going out to take some air, to go to some outside purpose, we are not feeling well, but if it is being a wide courtyard, automatically the air from the southern side or from the northern side, it will come out. And every room have enough space, doors and windows of the courtyard belongs to them, that side and the backside, both sides.

MB. And one of the courtyards you use for pujas, as well?

SD. Courtyards are generally used, at the only, for the official purpose, that is the marriage occasion, and the Durga puja ceremony, and other officials, say about some music conference, or any other conference for the courtyards are being used.

MB. Only very occasionally?

SD. Yes, only occasionally.

MB. And have there been any changes or adaptations made to the house, in terms of, I think you might have said?

SD. Not structural, nothing changing, structurally as it is, 200 years, 150 years ago.

MB. Are there any changes you would like to make to it now?

SD. No, only the old models (?) will be changed within a few years because some of the portion we have just as a floor. Nowadays, we have changed the floor of the building, that has been dilapidated condition, we have made it a new methodical Indian marble floor, and ground floor. And the staircase is also not to be destroyed or demolished, but we are thinking over the matter, to make a modern staircase for going upstairs.

MB. And do you have other prayer rooms in the house, do you have any rooms for shrines?

Nephew. At this end of the court.

SD. At this end of the building.

MB. You've already answered that as well, I know what work you do so, oh yes, do you have an office in your house, as well?

SD. No, the official going to maintain all the house property, we call the estate property, manage the estate, there is another provision apart from the gun business, we have some rented house in Calcutta, and outside Calcutta, so the rent collection, we have a *Sirca* over there to, for the arrangement of the tenants, the difficulties, or to the anything, that is another office is going to be maintained. That is, for a period time from 10.00 am, to say about 12.00 am, only two hours office is being maintained.

MB. This is the last page, this is really just about the changes, that have happened in the neighbourhood. Have there been any changes in buildings?

SD. No, no.

MB. Or, how things have been used?

SD. No, no, that is as it is.

MB. Always been like that?

SD. Yes, always.

MB. And have there been any new structures?

SD. New structures, no. Nothing, new structure, from the backside of our house or in the front side is the roadways, there is no new structure, there is no provision for the new structure.

MB. And what about social life, has that changed?

SD. Social life, is, yes, that is some change, over, that is coming up, because nowadays, you know our grandchildrens, are very, struck with their new fashion, and the social lives are going

to be on that tack (?), not the old method. As we are going to take our meal, therefore now they require the social (?), a table.

MB. To watch the TV?

SD. Yes, yes, TV, and the fridge and these are, everything is going to be, and the washing machine, they are going to be introduced in our, time to time.

MB. And I suppose, it's a similar thing in cultural activities, changes in cultural activities?

SD. Cultural activities, I mean, the, yes, the cultural activities, what you are seems to be, that old method they have their, as I say, my uncle sitting over there with the orchestra party or something, and my mother and my auntie is going on piano. But nowadays, they are not going to use all these things, only the, you know, the guitar if it is being possible or they are passing their time with TV.

MB. Right OK. And crime and security has that changed?

SD. Crime and security is, time to time.

Nephew. Crime has increased a lot.

SD. Lot of increasing because the security is, previously is, very, because of any method that has been done. There is no question of anything, any thieves or dacoits, are going to be entered in any interiors is not dare to come into the house. But nowadays, it is possible that the intruders, and the ruffians, and the big house, the wealthy people, they may anytime come over here and have some question. But once, only in a year, ten or fifteen years ago, I think so, my cousin-brother's house is being some ornaments, no, silver utensils have been stolen over there, that's all that happened.

Nephew. Music System.

SD. Music System.

MB. What about availability of goods and services, things like, are the shops . . ?

SD. Services have been here too, because the method of the services, now they have changed the services, nowadays (? ? ?) I think so, same proper time, and proper methodical way.

MB. Sanitation, has that changed?

SD. Well, we have improved in sanitation, because previously we were very cautious about all this sanitation, because one bathroom should be used by the all members. Nowadays, we have each and every, even each have a separate bathroom. Locality is also medium clean because that has been restricted by the Government, the Municipal Corporation. I can't throw any, say about, dust or anything to our, outside the house. We are very concerned that will be penalised by Municipal Officer.

Nephew. You throw any garbage outside your house, and you will get penalised. They will fine you.

MB. And what about the actual market, do you think the market, the commercialisation of the market, has Barabazaar spread further or changed?

SD. Yes, Barabazaar is going to each and every street, is being overpopulated, because, due to the small shops in the footpath, and Barabazaar area is coming advanced to the residential quarters. This is only for, I think so, this is fifteen or twenty years ago, there is nothing in that

area, only the limited sweet shops, laundry, grocery shops, etc. over there. Nowadays, the whole area is being utilised as a shopping area.

MB. And pollution?

SD. Pollution, yes, pollution started with the, from the car, or from the cooking system, is being changed now we use the gas, the helium gas, LPG, so the coal is not being used by any house.

MB. Right, you used to use coal?

SD. Yes, coal, and you know the cow dung.

MB. Oh, Yes.

SD. And wood sometimes, we have to make the . . .

Nephew. Charcoal.

SD. Yes, Charcoal.

MB. And traffic and congestion?

SD. Traffic, it is automatically inevitable that police make the one way traffic in front of our house, from Howrah Station to, up to Girish Park, because the two way traffic is being . . .

MB. Oh right its one way along . .

SD. Yes, one way, one way. There's a lot of change over traffic since I have been in our locality, in Barabazaar also, Barabazaar area. Chitpur is one way, your Strand Road is one way, Vivekenanda Road is one way. Lots of traffic.

MB. Is that in the last ten or fifteen years?

SD. Yes, fifteen years, something like that, but the slow moving cars are going to be withdrawn from Calcutta in due course in the Barabazaar area, such as the . . .the car is pulling by a cow.

MB. Oh yes, the bullock carts.

SD. Yes, the bullock carts.

MB. Noise as well?

SD. Noise pollution, yes.

Nephew. Recently Calcutta Corporation has taken a step that no noise will be created above 60 decibels. This was one or two years back.

SD. That is restriction, restriction by the Government of India.

MB. Is that 60 decibels from business?

Nephew. Any, anything.

SD. No, from the fireworks, I think, so fireworks that has been stopped, or any musical band party. Say about the marriage ceremonies going on, the band parties there.

Nephew. Also the political meeting, you can't use mics for that.

SD. Mics and etc., rather you can't use on any occasion, in your house, residency you have an occasion, you go on mic, the entire area will be polluted with the sounds. So these are the factors that have been changed.

MB. Right, OK, that's it.

Transcript of an interview with Ashim Kumar Sett

Infrastructure Engineers India Pvt. Ltd., 1A, Leela Roy Sarani, Calcutta
1 August 2001

Preliminary comments:

I had arranged to meet Mr. Sett in his offices in south Calcutta. When I arrived in the area, it was extremely humid after some rain and after asking several people, I could not find the place at all. Nobody knew of his firm or had heard of Leela Roy Sarani, as I later discovered the new name for that section of Gariahat Road. Mr. Sett had told me to look out for the 'Kwality Restaurant,' which I stumbled across eventually, but I still could not find his offices. I asked in the restaurant, and they sent me two miles down the road over Gariahat bridge. I returned to the restaurant and phoned Mr. Daw to see if he had an office telephone number for Mr. Sett. I rang the number he gave me, was given another and eventually got through. Mr. Sett came and met me two minutes later. I was dishevelled, sweating profusely and had a headache, not a good start to asking for an interview. Anyway Mr. Sett seemed to understand, and we went to his office which it turned out was next door to the restaurant. I was supposed to meet him at 2 p.m., eventually arrived about 3.30 p.m., and left at 5 p.m..

MB. Do you own the house?

AS. My father owned the house.

MB. Is your father still alive?

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. So when your father dies, will the house come to you?

AS. I also have other brothers.

MB. Oh, so you have brothers.

AS. Yes.

MB. How many brothers do you have?

AS. Three brothers, I am the youngest. My elder brother is a surgeon in ophthalmic - eye surgeon, doctor. And next brother is staying in London, he's a chartered accountant, and is practising over there. He is staying in Middlesex, I think Stanmore.

MB. Is there just you living with your father?

AS. Yes, we are still having a joint family. So long as my father and mother is alive we are still together.

MB. Are you married?

AS. Yes, married. I have got two children, one son, one daughter.

MB. This is about the history of the house, how long have your family, well you've said that already haven't you, your family's lived there for two hundred years is it?

AS. I think it is more than that. From the beginning, from the beginning, in fact our Sett family has migrated from western India, and came to this part of India around 1660, 65, 69, in the time when Job Charnock came to this city. Since then we are staying in this area, and this present building, must be more than 200 years old - at least the bottom ground floor portion is that time, only the ground floor. In fact, the second floor of the building was built around almost 70, 75 years back.

MB. Do you know who built it?

AS. It must be great grandfather.

MB. Then your family, it's occupied by your extended family. So there's your mother and father, yourself and your wife and your two children.

AS. And my elder brother and his wife and two children.

MB. As well?

AS. As well.

MB. And your other brother lives in London?

AS. Another brother lives in London.

MB. Do you have any sisters at all?

AS. Yes, they have married and they have left.

MB. So, there's just the numbers of people that live there, there's just the people you've just talked about, they're the only people that live there, you don't have any uncles?

AS. Yes, they have got separate properties. Some part of that building is also belongs to my uncles, but they do not live there. That part they have let it out.

MB. Have you any other relatives that live there in that property?

AS. Not in that property. In fact our property is not that building itself. It started from the crossing of the end of the road, it comes up to our building, in fact up to our next building. So in general sense, those buildings have been partitioned. In fact, my father's cousins are staying in the next lot.

MB. So you still own the block, you just rent out bits, is that right or do different people own?

AS. No, no, only renting out.

MB. This is a general question about the 'nuclear family.' A lot of people in India live in extended families, do you think that the nuclear family, the growth of the nuclear family has affected the way you live in your house?

AS. Look, for both the system there are positive sides and negative sides. In fact, you mean by nuclear family you mean to say husband wife and children.

MB. I wasn't meaning to criticise the extended family, but, I just wondered if, people were, some people have talked to me, and say that because of the size of their house, they have to, because it's small, they have to live in another place. Others they choose to live separately because their wife doesn't get on with their mother.

AS. But the fact is that out of 100, this reason is for 10 only.

MB. OK.

AS. And for 90, they want to sit up(?), they don't want to stay together. Because you know, two ladies in a kitchen is a hell of a lot, and all the things starts from there.

MB. Yes, do you think that in this area, in South Calcutta, it's a more modern area than Barabazaar, it is in some aspects. Is it more common for people to live separately in the south?

AS. Yes, yes. In fact, the joint families stays in those old areas of Calcutta, in Shyambazaar, in Bagbazaar, you will find a lot of families still living jointly. In fact, living jointly in our house we are living, staying, eating jointly. But there are a lot of families they are living jointly, having separate kitchens and all these things. But they are living jointly in a single premises, having there own part and all these things.

MB. Do you have other family members who live nearby in Barabazaar, do you have other properties in Barabazaar?

AS. Yes, yes, but those are rented out.

MB. OK, no family living there?

AS. No family living by means my brother's cousin. I mean my father's cousins, they are living side by side. In fact, you'll find the same history from them also.

MB. But you know Mr. Daw, he has, he has his house and there's another house down the lane with his brother's cousin.

AS. Yes, yes, yes, yes, they have divided those properties.

MB. Yes, yes, you don't have other separate properties other than that one at number three, there's just that one?

AS. No, we have separate properties. My uncle stays in some other areas, there in Park Street area, that is also our property.

MB. That was going to be my next question. Do other family member reside . . .

AS. Nearby in Barabazaar? No, not Barabazaar.

MB. A bit further away?

AS. Look, this is a very general thing, if someone has to shift, why should they shift from Barabazaar to Barabazaar. They should have come to a newer place, a better place.

MB. So they live further away, you say that one lives near here, in Ballygunj?

AS. Yes, yes. My father was three brothers. So my father's family still stays in Barabazaar. Other uncles, one stays in this Park Street area, and one stays in Salt Lake.

MB. Are your children at school?

AS. School? One of them has gone to college this year.

MB. Can you just describe a typical day, what you do in your day from when you get up until when you go to bed.

AS. Look, people like me who are having, trying to have some, something of his own, having some business, they do not have any time like this. It starts work from 8 o'clock in the morning and ends. It goes till 10 o'clock some days, 7 o'clock some days, some days we get off at 5 o'clock and go to club and have some drink, and go back to home. So that way activities are all business activities. In fact, we can really spend little time for our families. And that way since we are living in joint family, we have some advantage to this system. Because well there is someone to talk about, my wife can talk to someone, it's not that she's alone.

MB. And your children as well. This is your main business here?

AS. Yes.

MB. And do you have a business in the house?

AS. Yes, that is also a business, business of transportation, of goods. In fact, we have got it with partnership, with some share with some people, mainly they are looking after, we are just having a look on it, just control of it and all these things.

MB. It's difficult when you're not in the house to, it's hard for me to visualise where these all are. This is describing where you do different things in the house, different activities. As I don't know the house, maybe we leave this.

AS. No, no, I can tell it.

MB. OK, so eating?

AS. We have got a dining space, on the first floor.

MB. And washing?

AS. We've got separate bathrooms, washing, etc..

MB. And clothes washing?

AS. Yes, we have got washing machines also, we sometimes use that. And sometimes, you know this, I think you have seen in almost all the houses, some temporary people come, ladies and gents come, so we use to do cooking, do washing, and brooming and cleaning up floors, rooms.

MB. And do you have a sitting room as well?

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. And a place for receiving family guests?

AS. Yes, yes, guest room there.

MB. Business colleagues?

AS. Business colleagues are in ground floor, office spaces are there.

MB. Cooking as well?

AS. Cooking is in first floor, just by the side of the place, dining, cooking area is there.

MB. And work study, is it part of the office space?

AS. For study of children, they use to do it in their room.

MB. And children, presumably they have their own rooms, bedrooms. Are the bedrooms on, how many floors is it? Is it three storeys your house?

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. So the bedrooms are on the upper storeys?

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. And you have a prayer room.

AS. Yes, we have a puja room, prayer room.

MB. Is it on the top floor?

AS. Usually it should be in the top floor and we have a puja room, in fact in the top floor. In fact, over puja room there should not be any room for living. That is the concept, because in that case you are moving over the head of God.

MB. You mentioned before, part of your building is a temple?

AS. There is a temple, you can go and have a look at it.

MB. Is it on the corner you say?

AS. No, no, that part of building means, that part of building means from Kalakar Street, from here it starts the original buildings are like this, and this corner is the, this is the first gate, you will find a similar gate, like big gate in, just when you enter this street. You will find a temple and over that there is a placard, also written in English, also. The temple of Radha Kanto, this the Lord Krishna.

MB. I shall go and look at it.

AS. And these are the buildings, are part of now divided too.

MB. And you've mentioned about laundry and sweeping, and there are some areas of storage, there on the ground floor, where, in the courtyard there is a covered area.

AS. That is for business, that is for transportation. We have some storage godowns in the backside of ground floor.

MB. Does activity in the house vary at different times of the year?

AS. No, not much of variance.

MB. In some of the courtyard houses I have been to, like Mr. Daw's, he has a separate courtyard for the pujas, you know the *thakur dalan*, where they put the *Durga Puja*.

AS. No, we do not have one because, because we have this temple of our own, that is, that is why we do not have anything in our, in each house.

MB. So there's just that one courtyard.

AS. In fact, you should find it in a lot of, Mullick's house, and these Law's house, in College Street, they have also, this type of, they call it *thakur dalan*. Since we have got a separate *thakur bari*, there is a temple house, we do not have that.

MB. Do you have servants or domestic helpers that live in the house as well?

AS. Yes.

MB. How many of those?

AS. About three, four.

MB. Has the number of servants, has it changed over time?

AS. Yes, yes, because earlier we have got lot of servants, and darwans.

MB. Now you can't afford to keep them?

AS. Now, mainly the darwans, who used to collect rent and all these things, look after the properties, and now see they have divided to each sector. So everybody, in fact if you counted for the whole family it is same, but in our part it becomes three. You know, younger days, when all of our fathers and uncles have been living in the same house, we have got lot of servants and all these things.

MB. About the architecture of the house, do you, is there anything special about the architecture, do you think there is anything special about the architecture?

AS. In fact, I don't know the exact terminology, in fact, this is the same architecture I think you will find, you have written in a map, central courtyard and all along these buildings, rooms around this courtyard, that is the architecture.

MB. I didn't have a good look around when I was there, so I didn't see anything that, Mr. Daw's house has very fancy balconies, and a lot of decoration.

AS. No, we do not have like those things. In fact you will find those in the houses of the Mulicks, Laws, those who are much more richer than us.

MB. And then the courtyard, how is the courtyard used, is it just used for storage now?

AS. This is now being used for a business, yes. Otherwise it was actually used for playing, we used to play badminton in our child days, we used to play cricket over there.

MB. And for socialising and talking?

AS. Now since it is become a business, commercial place, we are using it for business purpose, that is all.

MB. Changes to the house. Well, you've already said some of these, there have been changes, adaption made to the house, it's been divided.

AS. Yes, yes, it's been divided. So, so, therefore actual room sizes are very big, so they have cut short for accommodating.

MB. So they've been to do with changes in the family, has your family got smaller as well, the numbers of people in the family, has that got smaller over time?

AS. I can say like that, because my father has three sons, two daughters, I have one and one. That way the family becomes smaller.

MB. It's not that much smaller, it's quite a similar size. If your father had ten children, and you had two. Are there any changes you would like to make to the house?

AS. Not exactly. Actually it is not the question of liking or disliking. It is a question of whether you have to, if your members of family increases you have to make some provision for them. That is one reason for changing the house, or anything. That is not required for us. We have enough space for living, the family now we have to be leaving. We are having ten members, all four, and father and mother, two, eight. Eight plus two ten. So that we have the guest room when my brother comes or when my sisters comes, they used to stay in the guest room. So as such there is no question of changing, are there any changes you would like to make, well no. But if we leave that house and go to some new house for, mainly for commercial purpose, to let this house use as a commercial house, where we can earn something. In that case we have to make some changes in the house. We have to make those rooms even smaller, because they need a room like this. A man dealing in clothes, they need a room like this having a godown space, somewhere outside or in the building, inside in the ground floor.

MB. They don't want a huge great big room.

AS. They do not want that.

MB. We've talked about the shrine room.

AS. Yes, yes, in fact, we used to have a puja room, where we used to have small idols of, idols of Lord Krishna, because we are mainly followers of Krishna. So we used to have those small idols and my mother and father, in fact, I do not do it myself. But every ladies member used to do some prayer over there. In fact, we do not have any, like other, other, Mullick families or Law families, Law families they use the *Durga Puja*. We do not have those types of *pujas*, because we are basically this boysnaps (?), and since we have got a separate temple house, and we used to have festivals for that, you know *Jamwustomi* (?) is coming, this *julam* (?) is now going. These are the festivals of Krishna. So that is being followed in our temple house. We have *boogas* (?), *sebayeths* (?) used to come. So that we do not have, have any, any *puja* festival in the house itself.

MB. What work do you do?

AS. I am doing some contracting business, in civil engineering line. In fact, I am doing consultancy also.

MB. And the rest of your family, you've mentioned your brother, one's a surgeon, one's an accountant.

AS. Yes.

MB. So you're all in different lines of work.

AS. We have some common business, like the business we have in our house. This is a joint business.

MB. You're not like, well Mr. Daw, his family, they seem, everybody's in the arms business.

AS. Yes, in fact, there business was always with the, dealing with arms and ammunitions, and in fact, I think they have got, this outlets, like outlet you have seen in Dalhousie. They have got this outlet all over eastern India. They have divided themselves, I think you must have seen it.

MB. Yes, he has told me. Has your family always done this sort of work, or have you had a shared, like your father and his brothers, did they have a shared business?

AS. No. In fact, in our family, the business starts from our generation only, our fathers were not businessmen. In fact, my father had three brothers, one of them was an attorney, and my father and my next uncle, they are both doctors. So they had their profession.

MB. So this is the last page. It's really about changes, changes that have happened in the neighbourhood. Do you know a lot of your neighbours, you've lived there for such a long time you must know most of your neighbours?

AS. Yes.

MB. Everyone in the street?

AS. Yes, in the same street.

MB. You know them all? Yes. Can you describe what the street is like at night time. Do people sleep in the street or is it completely quiet, after all the shops have shut?

AS. In fact, if you say so, in our childhood there are more number of people sleeping in the street. These days it is considerably reduced. It is reduced, a couple, a couple, of vagabonds

you can see today sleeping here, next day somewhere else. It's not that, this has improved a little bit, this. So not really people sleeping in the footpaths and all these things. But there are, there are some labour classes, not in our locality, in our street, there you find a lot of, lot of people are staying, sleeping in the footpaths. They are basically earning a lot of money during daytime, they are labour class, they have migrated, from say, Bihar, U. P., and all these things. They just somehow have some food from some small outlet, *soutils* (?) and all these things, and have a sleep over there, and all day they are working.

MB. So at night time the street is quite quiet?

AS. Quiet, yes.

MB. Changes in the neighbourhood, have there been any changes in the buildings?

AS. Building use is totally changed. It's now, it's now almost fifty per cent commercial. It was previously totally for residential. The ground floor of most of the buildings have changed, in fact, in our building also, in the front part, the part which has been divided to my Uncle. The ground floor has been changed to shops. So that way building changes in the, mostly in the ground floor of the buildings, they have changed to commercial.

MB. What were they before, were they residential?

AS. Yes, yes, it was before residential.

MB. And have there been any new structures?

AS. In fact, in Barabazaar area, look, not much of new structures, because there was no empty land, no vacant land was there. There are some structures, some dilapidated buildings demolished and then new building built.

MB. What about the social life, has that changed at all?

AS. Look, change of social life in Barabazaar, there is lot of change, because the society itself has changed. Because in Barabazaar area lot of people from outside, migrated into it. In fact, it was, in say fifty years back, it was, it was totally Bengali dominated area. Now it has changed to, first of all only thirty five, thirty five to thirty percent Bengalis are there. And basically Marwaris are basically here, and for labour class these people from Bihar and Orissa. So they have come in to this thing, they taken small rooms, as they intended to use, started staying over this place. So that way the, that structure of that society has changed in this area.

MB. Presumably a lot of the people, well, if the building use has changed from residential to commercial, then a lot of those people that lived in the houses will have moved out, so the social life will have changed, in that way. And do you do a lot more of your socialising, is a lot more of your social life in south Calcutta around, well, around your work?

AS. Why you are saying in social, South Calcutta. Even the culture, what this area, where you are staying now, Bagbazaar, Shyambazaar is predominantly Bengali dominated or Bengali area. Their lives are also different, they used to have a chat in the street in the evening. In fact, in Barabazaar you will never find it, you will never find people of my age say of 45, 48. Forget about it, even, even boys of say 20, 18, 20, they are talking and gossiping by the side of the tea stall, and gossiping you won't find it in Barabazaar area, you will find it in this north Calcutta and even in South Calcutta also.

MB. Most people are doing business there?

AS. Most people, most people are engaged in something.

MB. So, similarly cultural activities have obviously changed?

AS. Yes.

MB. And what about crime and security, has that changed?

AS. It has changed. There is some deterioration in this law and administrative, there are little bit of crime, yes, pick-pocketing, what do you call it, snatching.

MB. Bag snatching?

AS. Not bag snatching, supposing some businessman carrying say half a million Rupees for bank, snatching. That has increased a little bit. In fact, lot of them are also say concocted it, it's a got up.

MB. Oh, I see what you mean.

AS. No, it's a got up.

MB. And the availability of goods and services?

AS. What do you mean by services?

MB. Things like electricity, gas, water.

AS. Look, since, this is the best in Barabazaar, because this is the wholesale market of all these things, but so far as this government services like electricity, gas, these same everywhere, but it is available, no problem.

MB. But is hasn't changed, hasn't got better or got worse?

AS. No, it is better.

MB. And sanitation as well, has that changed at all, has that got better as well?

AS. Sanitation means?

MB. Things like toilets, latrines.

AS. In fact you know this, in Calcutta, this is underground system and all these things, like London and all these places. And since Barabazaar is just by the side of the River Ganges, so it is a high level. This is on the western side, river is on the western side, and the whole lot of this drainage system goes to eastern side, Salt Lake and all these things. This, one of the main problem is logging of water, during raining. That is, that situation has a little bit worsened because of the eastern side of Calcutta, lot of, you can say lot of habitation has come up, so that drainage system is getting full up.

MB. But that must affect the whole of Calcutta.

AS. The whole of Calcutta. In fact the worst hit is this area, this south Calcutta area.

MB. And I think you've already answered this question as well about the market becoming more commercial, the buildings are being taken over by businesses, you know it's becoming more commercial.

AS. Yes, yes, yes.

MB. What about pollution?

AS. Yes, yes, that is, I think, it's the most affected, it's terrible. I don't know how are you, how are you managing it. So pollution is the worst.

MB. Is it, in your street, is it, are there many cars come up and down it, as well?

AS. Yes, you can say, the number of cars has gone up definitely. But in fact, pollution in the whole of Calcutta is very poor, very, very ,very sorry state of affairs.

MB. But on some of the, in Barabazaar, in some of the narrower lanes where there are no cars, it's not too bad.

AS. That way you are correct. But the general atmosphere is very, very poor, total Calcutta.

MB. I can't remember, but the road that your house is on, is it wide enough to drive down, lorries go up and down it?

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. And presumably, it's got noisier as well?

AS. Noise is very high, compared to your standard, standard of Europe, very high, very, very, high.

MB. I mean it's not only the traffic, but there's people shouting in the streets.

AS. Yes, yes.

MB. Right that's it, end of questions.

1. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Market Traders

Transcript of an Interview with Trader A

17 July 2001

Preliminary comments:

I said to Trader A that I would like to interview him and we started there and then. It went on for a long while, and after the interview which lasted a couple of hours, we talked for another hour. There were various insights in the post-interview chat. He talked about how he thought that the Marwaris in Barabazaar were more traditional than their ancestors back in Rajasthan. We were talking about hawkers and how they sleep on the pavement - he said if you came back to the area around China Bazaar Street at 9 p.m., there are people cooking in the streets. I wondered if the boys I had seen playing cricket on Sunday outside the Rohatgi's house lived on the street as well.

He talked about their tradition of marrying within the caste. He said that he was not allowed to see his wife for 1 month after their wedding. He was pretty positive that nothing had changed in this part of Barabazaar for the last century apart from the people, but I could not believe they were all living in a vacuum and were not aware what was going on in the world elsewhere, even in their own backyard in south Calcutta and in other Indian cities.

MB. So, do you own the business?

A. Yes, I own my own business. I do the business of trading in paper and thermo-coil business, I'm manufacturing thermo-coils, manufacturer of thermo-coils. Yes, I do start, I did start my business as my own, as my father was the jeweller, and his business has gone with him, we could not follow that.

MB. He was a jeweller?

A. Err?

MB. A jeweller, he made jewels?

A. No, no jewellery

MB. Oh, jewellery yes, yes.

A. He was a jeweller, so we could not follow that jewellery business because he had expired when I was studying in university, he expired so I could not follow that business, that is of the highest (?), particularly you should know about the jewellery or gems he was dealing in that. So that business has gone with him. So when I came out of the university I just started this paper business and then subsequently after some time I started manufacturing thermo-coils.

My son has recently involved in this business of our paper and thermo-coils he has just joined last year after finishing his honours course, bachelors honours course, and he is assisting me now.

Employees we have in our factory, we employ nearly 15 members and relationships with them are very cordial. Of course cordial we have to make.

MB. Yes. No I suppose I meant, meant by this was that it, this was more if you had family members working for you.

A. No, in factory we don't have family members, but at our office here in shop we have my own son is here (name?) and one manager is belonging to my place, native place. The manager who is looking after the shop he belongs to my native place. So in that way he is not directly related but he belongs to my place. So he is a reliable person here managing the place of the shop in my absence and there are four persons employed here in the shop.

MB. Your native place, I know you told me last time I was here?

A. My native place is Sujangad(?) Rajasthan. It is at Rajasthan. Sujangad(?) is my place and many famous people belong to that place. Like, many are residing at London and in USA, many people from Sujangad(?), my place. It is a tiny small town having a population of say 1 Lakh only. So we have migrated here many years back from Sujangad(?), but still we are in touch with my native place.

So age group of my factory people are around, you see, between 30-40. Forty is the average. And sex is in factory, it is now all totally male, and in shop is totally male. No female is employed. I don't mind employing but the job there requires the male. It is physically more required.

Occupation, my occupation?

MB. Yes I suppose, well that, you don't need to worry about the factory, it's, the people you employ here are mostly, well there's the manager you mentioned and then.

A. Yes one manager here, he is looking after, one manager I have appointed here at my factory, he is looking after the whole employees here. So the occupation of that manager is just to manage the things there at factory.

MB. Then all your employees at the factory they're just making the thermo-coils?

A. Yes, yes they are running the mill and just packing some are packing the materials, some are cutting the materials, and some are finishing the materials, so many departments are there.

MB. And the people who are working at your shop here they are just packing the paper?

A. Yes packing the paper and selling it. They are salesmen, also they are salesman come packer both. They just ask the people they tell the people the rates and then when they order they just pick it and give it to them. That is the thing.

My timing, my own timings, you see typical day in the office. I just wake up in the morning at around eight. Then I just take my initial bathing and all these things and then at nine I open the shop. And that time I am alone my manager is not there, my son is not there, I alone remain there up to eleven when my manager and my son comes. And then I just take leave from there and from eleven to twelve I just take accounts, watch the accounts see the (?), people send me the report and see, I was the reports and write some comments to them and give instructions. Between eleven to twelve I manage like that.

And from twelve to three p.m. I take my lunch and take some rest. That is the period twelve to three that is the period. After three to six I devote my time for the interaction with the people who are associated with the hobbies. I just prefer the people, the dealers are coming here they show the material to me pertaining to their hobbies. Between three to six that is the time I just spare for them.

MB. You mean hobbies like?

A. Hobbies like papers, epimarias (?), postal, philately, numismatic and many hobbies I am just, I am dealing with all sorts sometimes. I am purchasing constantly from them the people, just want to come, they know my time is three to six so that they come here and show the material to me and I just purchase from them, what I just sell to them sometimes and that is the period I just give from three to six.

From six to nine you see this is not that I go to the market now from six onwards. I take one hour for the market where I interact with the people who are purchasing the material from me and who are selling the material to me for my paper shop. And I'm selling the material my (?) and my paper to the people and I just leave there. It may prolong up to eight sometimes,

maybe sometimes seven. Then I just come to my home at around seven thirty or eight sometimes. Then I just take my bath and all these things and then sent to us this television, watching television, and by the time I watch the television up to eleven p.m. I do all my research works, writing, even in front of the TV. TV is on, I may be watching sometimes and maybe writing something, I write my articles and my papers and just whilst writing the notes on the hobbies and the coins I purchase, I just browse it in the catalogues note, jot it down there and that is the time just devoted for writing, watching and reading and all these things.

And at eleven I retire and for one hour, I always prefer to read books pertaining to hobbies and pertaining to the different ideas and inventions, science inventions maybe some information like that I devote one hour always reading books, magazines, journals. I subscribe to many journals even from out of India. There are two London institutions one is India Study Circuit for Philately and another is Oriental Numismatics. Both are situated at London and I am a member of both those societies so they usually send magazines out. And in India I am also subscriber for three, four magazines. So I take this opportunity for one hour every day to read.

MB. Makes the most of the day.

A. So practically I work this is the peak hours which I have mentioned for working about my business.

Yes, it varies sometime in the year because you see this is seasons are here in Calcutta. Seasons I mean there is a business season. Say during the *pujas*, which we say *Durga Puja*, and all these festivals the workload is too much, the people buy more during those period and it starts just after rainy season.

MB. September time?

A. Yes, it goes up to February, generally February and it's starting from beginning, from you see just August, September like that, after the rainy season. So those period is very tough period and we are devoting more time to business. and during those times all my other things are a little bit subdued. So it varies.

MB. That's when you make your money though.

A. Yes, that is the thing.

Suppliers, where do you get your goods? I am getting my goods right from Calcutta of the paper and sometimes from outside of Calcutta. But thermo-coil you see is particularly I am getting from two companies one is of German BASF, and another is of Korea that is LG Polymers Ltd. So these are the raw material suppliers.

MB. Lucky Goldstar?

A. Yes.

MB. So they just send you the bits to make the coils?

A. No, they often visit to my place then quote the price, we negotiate and do some bargaining and after doing that they want to give me the materials. That equates with our (?). The raw material we are getting from them and they are preserving this material from abroad, they are importing it from abroad and keep it here in their *godowns*, the imported material. Because EPS is not manufactured here in India, nobody is manufacturing EPS. It is only imported from outside and the people who are having these facilities are selling the material here. At Calcutta they have their depots they have their *godowns*.

MB. What's EPS again?

A. Expanded poly (?)

MB. Oh, right okay

A. The thermo-coil is a very common term, but the name of this is EPS, expanded poly (?). So this raw material we are getting from them.

No we use suppliers you see only two options are here in my thermo-coil EPS. There is no other option than these two. These are the only two firms which are dealing in EPS. So there is no other source we have to buy from.

MB. No other choice.

A. No choice. We have to buy from them, sometimes themselves quarrel between themselves. So they quote lower price. Some of them say between these two, they are not cost, and they just quote less of them the others. Sometimes LG Polymers give a lesser rate and sometimes BASF gives a lesser rate. So we just want to have a (?) between these two we have no (?).

MB. What about your paper supply?

A. Paper I am getting from my friend's family business. Not business partner, no business partner because this is my own business, so that does not happen no family members are giving only the (?) are there because I am running this paper business from last twenty years, so many friendships have developed with many people who are just dealing directly somebody or directly dealing by from the paper mill and some distributors are there appointed by the paper mills. So they often visit my shop, they quote their price and there are many new avenues for it. There is no particular supplier like BASF, there are many suppliers. So we just have a good bargaining time. This paper business not particularly family people.

My customers are diversified from all walks of, even the, this paper is being used by everybody, even by the poor and even by the rich. So we have diverse interest. But people come to us for buying because of our behaviour and our constant supplies. We keep the material ready for them every time, say if the people do not have the time now to visit your place twice or thrice for each particular thing. Whenever he comes whenever a customer visits our shop he know that the paper will be available here all the time so he don't bargain, he just gives the money, exact money, even sometimes the people know my prices fixed. So you know this fixing of the price because the people know that these people don't bargain, we don't give the price, hide and seek, there is no question of that. We keep our price, one price we quote and the people know sometimes our price who are visiting Delhi, often they are coming to us, they tender exact amount and we give them the material. We don't say no to anybody and we know our customers what they require. So we keep the material from the very outset for them keeping in mind what they want. And that is the thing that they never return dissatisfied from us.

MB. So they know you are honest.

A. Yes they know my honesty also because they know that Marwaris are very honest people. This is the tag with the Marwaris, you see we are from Rajasthan. The people here from the very beginning even the Europeans who were here, they admired Marwaris very much. They knew that our words are always maintained at any circumstances even if we lose, we supply the material. Whatever we do whatever we commit we (?). That is why this is the one main factor that the people just want to take material from the shops of the people belonging to Rajasthan. That is one thing and the second thing is this that we supply the material them whatever they want. That is our motto that the people should be satisfied first. And also our prices are competitive and we give the flow of the materials always. So that is why the people are coming to us. Whatever and whoever is buying from us they will stick to us for years to come.

They are coming from all regions you see. Not from particularly Barabazaar, Barabazaar people are more coming because it is very closer to us but the people even from other regions and even from the suburbans and even from outside the state they are coming to us because there are many states eastern joined states which are in vicinity of this West Bengal like

Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya like that. The people often come here and in Bihar even particularly in that side northern side there is Bihar and U.P. the people are coming here. The states which are closer to West Bengal they come to us for buying. So it is not particular that we are selling it to the Barabazaar people.

MB. The people that come from far away, are they buying wholesale from you?

A. Yes, because we are doing both the things we are dealing in wholesale also and we are dealing in retail also. So the people from Barabazaar, they come for retailing and the people from outside they come for the wholesale thing. So we cater to both categories of the customers.

Yes there is a paper retailers association here but we have some unofficial, he is not registered society, some unofficial gathering we had but you see various people are not helping each other. But the paper retailers association is there, there are two paper retailers associations one is of the all India label and another is of the West Bengal label this state label. So we are a member of the local one, not the all India but they are affiliated with the all India. So there is an association.

Yes they are organised in the way that they are keeping in mind the interests of the paper traders in general but lot of the things depends on the government.

Banks you see here government banks Indian banks they have their own infrastructure. Whereas foreign banks have their own infrastructure there is lot of work difference between work culture of the two banks. One category belonging to foreign contain even more facilities they do business very promptly but they charge too much. Whereas the Indian banks they give services, although they give services of all kinds but they are very slow, but they charge very small amount for the same service that the foreigners are charging too much. For example, we have to keep say about fifty thousand bucks in a foreign bank for running our current account, whereas in Indian banks we have to keep only one thousand Rupees. So that's fifty thousand Rupees difference. So the people are, just the banks, so far as the banks are concerned I have my particular thing, keeping my accounts in Indian bank and for the immediate account where services are more actively required in sales business I have kept my account in Standard Chartered Bank in the foreign bank because there the promptness is required and here if I keep the account in the Indian bank they will (?). So I am dealing with both the banks so far as money is concerned because I don't want to keep fifty thousand Rupees in a foreign bank. So I am just keeping one thousand Rupees there and dealing my things. Maybe sometimes that I am getting my cheques you see predicated by three to four days whereas in foreign banks it is debited the same. That is the difference but still I prefer to keep it here because of the money involved.

MB. It's funny because in English banks it always takes four days to credit money. Same as India.

A. It takes generally three to four days.

MB. There is an express service but you have to pay money for it.

A. Local authorities you see is very part of the Corporation, Calcutta Corporation. They are in charge of the footpaths, whereas road belongs to another agency that is police so if we keep our material in the roads the police will obstruct us whereas if we keep the material at the footpath the Corporation comes. So they are cordial which, so far as we meet their requirements by paying tax in time. You see Corporation have their own, if we do business we have to obtain a license from the Corporation. And if we do some profession here we have to pay a professional tax so we are giving both because once you have taken the Corporation license you have to pay the professional tax also both are co-related.

MB. I was reading somewhere that in certain areas of Barabazaar you are only allowed to deliver goods at certain times of the day?

A. No, they give materials by cycles vans, auto rickshaws, like that because in Barabazaar you can not come with the trucks very narrow lanes are there. So the people, those are carting in Indian term it is Charka (?). Charka (?) is a term where the people keep the material on their head and then deliver it here. So Barabazaar is very different for that, and even the cycle rickshaws are very frequent. The people pedal the cycle and they keep some carriage there behind them and then deliver the material. That is the way we distribute but here you see this police comes in because police says that during this day time it is not allowed. So we have to take the material in day time so something goes on like that. So that is the only where these people come. But nobody is in that sense obstructing local authorities are not (?) that is being charged by the local government on the sale of the goods so they are often visiting our place for watching that the proper things are being done here. If they get any improper things they may just harass. But that depends on person to persons so far as we are concerned we are very much particular that government dues should be paid in time whatever it is whether it is legally made by them or illegally made by them but it should be paid immediately and subsequently when we find that we have paid other than what is legitimate then we claim from them. But I personally feel that I should not keep any money of the government because government runs on our money itself. They can not run without giving them the properly dues.

But generally they are cordial, generally. Many people are there you have seen in every walk of life there are people who are good and bad. But generally in West Bengal I have found that these are the official people are very cordial. They don't unnecessarily harass if you can keep them abreast with all the things which is required.

Yes, my home is itself situated in Barabazaar, it is Old China Bazaar Street. Yes, this is Old China Bazaar Street and this is the beginning of the home here. When in the neighbourhood it is Synagogue Street my next building is Synagogue Street but my building starts with Old China Bazaar Street. So it is the oldest street you see the Armenians were here and this is the place surrounding us all the homes old buildings belonging to the Armenians and in fact my ancestors also purchased this building from one Armenian, and his name was Hardis (?). So the church is just behind my place you can watch the synagogue here that is the oldest one of the oldest in Calcutta I should say it is the oldest one of the Armenians at least it is the oldest for the Armenians. So another churches are here, three, four churches are surrounding us, one is the road just facing us is Armenian Street and then it is Cathedral Street and so my house is very old one it should around 150 years old when we have purchased it and still it is the very old fashion and we are maintaining it for the last twenty years.

Yes my family is extended could not because extended families but they have all gone from here at least I am in this particularly in this building I am living with my family say my wife and my two children. We are the four persons only who are living here yes in this particular building.

We have one male and one female I have two children one is the female is 24 and my son is around 23. My daughter is now doing MA she has already passed BA Honours and my son is now after passing BA. Com Honours he is now doing MBA. He has already given the entrance examination and he has received invitations from various institutions and he may be choosing out of one of them and he will finish his MBA. I hope so.

I know almost all the people around China Bazaar because every Sunday or on the festival time we interact with each other we have a *mohalla* committee. *Mohalla* means this local inhabitants have a committee which organise the *puja* festivals. So we interact that time also because *pujas* are many here you see these religious *pujas* are here throughout the year in Bengal particularly. The people are very much conscious about their religious *pujas*. So we interact with every this these type of functions and even on the, during this shopping time we see each other many times. So I know almost the whole people living around my house.

The streets are becoming clumsy from day to day you see. The (?) has no chance streets are narrow from the very beginning, not have been broadened, there is no scope for broadening them and previously what happened the Corporation people everyday they washed the streets by sprinkling water but now that facility has also gone and the people are themselves doing their cleaning job. But the people from other states have come here and encroached the streets that is the bad part of it that the encroachers have encroached almost all the streets

around Barabazaar. And you can watch many people by the both sides of the road sitting there and doing their business openly.

MB. You mean the hawkers?

A. Yes, hawkers. so the hawkers problem is there increasing by leaps and bounds. Everyday they are there this is the change I have seen previously it was very clean and empty roads. But nowadays you see you can see a lot of hawkers there. So that is the change what I am finding here up to late.

Neighbourhood changes rapidly you see sometimes some family are living in one particular house, sometimes they leave it and then some other family comes. And, because most of the houses are not owners, the people, the owners are not living in their own houses, they are just renting it to the people more particularly from Rajasthan and Bihar, these are the two states which most of the Barabazaar occupiers. So the people just give, the owners give their own rate and it changes every time say some people are living there for two years say three years, and then some other family comes and they goes out. So that is constantly I have seen particularly in my China Bazaar Street that the people are being changed and they are very thickly populated this area is. By you see the space is less and the people are more. So even in one room many families are living and there is only one common bathroom for the whole building sometimes. Because previously these buildings are made where there was no bathrooms at all, no toilets. So only one toilet is there for say fifty people even sometimes. And moreover the people who are living on the streets the hawkers they used to sleep on the pavements many times, so they also use those toilets. So the pollution of the toilets here is not so healthy. So that is the thing here.

MB. Have you noticed any changes in these sorts of things, like buildings?

A. Actually the buildings in Barabazaar are particularly I have not seen any change.

MB. Just the area around here?

A. Yes, the same things are being maintained so far as my house is concerned. I have not seen I am here for the last thirty, forty years but I have not seen any particular change here. Only thing is there is some constructions are made on the roof. But there is no scope in the downstairs say in the ground floor or in the first floor there is no changes and in other buildings surrounding me I have also seen these things only thing is two or three buildings here in Old China Bazaar Street have been destroyed and then multi-storey has been made only few buildings two or three there are. But many buildings are more than hundred years old here and they don't have any changes particularly change nothing.

MB. In terms of the paper shops they have always been here?

A. Paper shops are there only the owners have changed. The shops are there so far as they because owners have changed and I have also worked on this aspect. Many shops here are more than 150 years old. I am keeping the bills and cash memos of those shops particularly from the very beginning I have. I am a collector of that, I am very enthusiastically collecting these things. That whatever, say in this Barabazaar area Raja Bazaar Street for example there were many old shops there and English people were there having their shops there. So I have particularly the bills and cash memos of those English people also. And then subsequently it all changed hands, some Bengali fellows also took over that shops, and then subsequently it remains standing everything. But the shop and their size and their shape and their wholeness remains the same, only the owners change.

New structures are few as I told you.

MB. Yes, just the hawkers and the things on the roof.

A. Yes, that is only thing. Only two, three buildings have been made particularly multi-storey, say 4, Synagogue Street is a building where the old building was destroyed and then made a

multi-storey. But not all, Ninety nine percent, ninety percent I should say are remaining as this, there is no change.

Social life, as I told you during the *puja* festivals they are very enthusiastic and but all the other times they just make their livelihood only. They could meet both (?)

MB. In terms of, I mean is there, has there . . .

A. There is no club here.

MB. Yes, yes, but in terms of, has the social life changed in the thirty or forty years you have been here or has it always been the same?

A. Changed in the sense.

MB. Has there always been a neighbourhood committee?

A. No neighbourhood committee is here you see and many people from all different walks are here say during the *puja* they celebrate it in all the streets. There is a temple here, Shiva temple and the people just gather there and say when the people from Bihar they are celebrating their own festival, and the people from Rajasthan are celebrating their, so the only place is here the common place is here what you call the courtyard of the, *chowk*, that is called *chowk*, so this is China Bazaar *chowk*, the only place where people can interact with each other. And you see, the thing the good thing is this it is a cosmopolitan Barabazaar. Barabazaar is a cosmopolitan in real sense. Because the people from all the time, say from Bihar or Rajasthan they have their own culture but they are free to celebrate their own festivals, there is no bar at all. But life generally is that the people are still that they want their traditional things. Don't want to say even the songs they are singing, or the dances they are performing, those are all traditional. They don't want any influence from other things comes to them. People still like to be what their ancestors were, they like it. I don't find any rapid change or any particular change in social life, no.

Cultural activities as I told you this only this Barabazaar is alive during the *pujas*.

Crime and policing this has, crime has increased due to this is more particularly due to the shortage of space. Because the people are more, and space is limited. So everybody wants to do their business and the hawkers they have been allowed in India you see the Supreme Court the highest court has a verdict that every people have the right to do the business. If they don't have the place they can do the business on the street but they have to do the business so far as the day is there and when ever they return back to their house they should pack it and take it away their business. They don't have to put permanent structures. But you see this is a harassment every day they lay their goods there and every evening they just remove them, it is not desired by them. So the people use force to keep their material there. So many people when they, everybody wants to keep their material there, everybody wants to do business, so there the crime increases. The crime you see this is the thing a phenomena where there are have nots and there are haves, so that is the (?) there not in India not in it is in England it is everywhere.

MB. I think in England it's different sorts of crime. In England we have a lot of trouble with drugs.

A. No I don't think the drug trouble is here.

MB. No I know it's different, there isn't a drugs problem here

A. No there is no drug problem here particularly in Barabazaar I know there is no drug problem is there but only problem is this financially the people are of different styles. Some are weaker sections some are higher sections so that things give them a chance to commit these crimes. Because of the finance everybody wants to earn something and if they don't get money then they really get to this crime. Only the financial returns are there. But without this,

drug problem is not there, the people are taking drugs so far as what is allowed say cigarettes or *bidis* what they called the poor people take *bidis* and sometimes they these Bihar from the people from Bihar they are very much fond of Kenny (?). Kenny (?) is a term where they get this is a *ganga* you see the Indian name is *ganga*. These are the roots the people just mix it with the lime.

MB. Do they sell it on the streets?

A. Yes on the streets.

MB. Yes I've seen it

A. Yes they mix it with limes, rub it with their thumb and then they take it in their mouth. They keep it in their mouth and that is the thing they are using more. and many people are taking *pan* very much, this betel, these are very famous here. So the drugs are still not here at least in Barabazaar even in schools and colleges of Barabazaar, no student is taking drugs that much I know. But the people even from the affluent side they are taking drugs, even the college students are taking drugs.

MB. I think that's probably why, I mean in England we get college students taking drugs and in schools as well you get drugs it's sad.

A. But this is not in Barabazaar particularly I tell you, this is the only thing which we are we can say the (?) are taking *bidis*, cigarettes and all these things. But these are you see most of the people here are working class in Barabazaar, even fifty, sixty percent are coolies and cart pullets and rickshaw pullers, like those. So those people need some type of you see they are taking *topicos* (?), they are taking cigarettes, like those things. But so far as these Marijuana or drugs like that, no nothing. Sometimes they take, the wines are here the people take wine in the evening or during the festival times it is (?) but not always. They can't afford it also.

Services the people are getting goods and services out of I told you already.

Sanitation is poor. Not properly because there is no change from the very beginning whenever when the English people have found this city during the Charnock time and after they have developed it. Sanitation, whatever sanitation they have been developed we have not been able to update that. There is whatever is going from tradition is just and now when the population has gone up you need more sanitation. So that is the things there that problem is there every now and then you see even the, even the sanitation just mix up with the tap water also sometimes, drinking water. Because, drinking water, so they are running prevalent hidden in the street that is behind the street, so these parallel runs, everything is on the below there, so electricity is there, telephones are there, even water supplies are there and sanitation is there. And so sometimes water it(?)

MB. Not very nice.

A. But the people from Barabazaar are very alert, they just inform the people, they are coming, our councillor particularly is very, the councillor of this area because they know that if they do not give the services they will be ousted next time, so they are very much co-operative and they look after this sanitation. And more particularly our councillor he is now in the he is in executive position my councillor of this area so he does a lot of work for the people. So sanitation problem is there and it is bound to be increased everything, because there is no new nothing has been done after that.

Market commercialisation.

MB. I suppose you have answered that already, in a way when you said that there is more hawkers there's more people coming in to sell things.

A. It is becoming more commercial I think the people are coming here for their livelihood and even you see the tea shop here, tea stall, they are doing a lot of business here. Because the

people are too much here and the people want to take even a sip of tea and they are making too much of money, making too much of the money. That is the problem of Barabazaar.

[New tape]

MB. Maybe we have almost finished.

A. Pollution you see. So far as the pollution is concerned you see, Calcutta is highly polluted, and particularly the Calcutta city is itself very much polluted. But people are not so much conscious here in Barabazaar about the pollution because we don't have any space left to grow greenery's and if you are to control the pollution you need greenery's. So there is no scope we do not have any open space here in Barabazaar where we can put up some garden or some anything so the pollution problem will increase day by day. And still it is very alarming, and noise pollution is also there. One pollution is the people are very religious and two times they perform *pujas* here by . . .

MB. By ringing the bells, yes I heard them before.

A. Yes ringing the bells at twelve and seven so you can't help here. The noise pollution is, other noise pollution is the people speaks too much. We speak too much.

MB. Common throughout India!

A. No, common in Barabazaar particularly, because the people will talk every time you will find that the people sitting on the pavements, they are talking always. Not conscious about their noise. This problem is very definite, and the people you see, the result of this is that many of the people can not hear properly, even if you tell me very slowly I won't be able to just listen to it. Because I have to undertake two times in a day this ring this bells ringing for fifteen minutes constantly at more than 100 decibels, more than 100 decibels. That is the problem.

Street vendors and hawkers as I told you this is the problem because the people, people have to do business. And this is the best place where the people can the hawkers can do more business here.

So far as my business is concerned we have two things you see the paper and the thermo-coils. So my business you see will flourish because everybody when there will be more consciousness the people will use more paper. In India particularly it is the lowest consumption of the paper, today. But the highest consumption is no doubt in America and or Britain. But the people here have just started learning. One time it was the Bengal was highest in literacy, but it has really got into third or fourth position now. But still when ever the people need you see when ever here in India anybody just born, the people write to their relatives that somebody has born in our family. So they need the paper overtime, so I can see my business particularly will never.

MB. Everyone is always going to need paper.

A. It will increase the people with the consciousness increases, you see the people are if the people will be inclined towards the this learning or reading or anything they will require the paper.

MB. In Europe when computers came in everyone said you wouldn't need paper anymore, but.

A. The computer also needs paper you see.

MB. I know exactly.

A. The computer also needs it is need of paper.

MB. It produces more paper.

A. And people are more taking papers in computers I have seen it even the reading the students they consume less papers than the people who are having computers. Because there are a lot of things they have built in minds of information in computer, and everybody wants to take out some things. So far as I have told you just now that I am getting list of Nobel Prize winners. So I need the paper for getting down the I down load it.

MB. This is all done on a computer, but you need the paper . . .

A. Yes, you need paper. So even if somebody dies here, we have to write in postcards. That is needed, the plain bordered post card we use when somebody expires here and we write that somebody has expired and you are informed that this, this, this has happened. So this is our tradition. Whenever somebody is born we write whenever somebody dies we write. So the paper is needed at each and every stage here, but the consumption is poor because the people don't want to educate themselves. When there is no education you see less paper is used. Now what happens in the offices as you said these are rapidly used so the paper consumption is big. But in India you see this computer science has not developed yet as what is required. But whenever it will be more paper will be used. Paper will never die this business that is why I have chosen this one.

And so far the thermo-coil is concerned you see the thermo-coil is allowed in the European countries also. The polythene they have there, the plastic they have other plastic they have banned but still the thermo-coil is allowed for the picking of the things which are prone to destroy. Say television, say fridge, tape recorders, transistors, they are all packed in thermo-coil boxes. So that I can contemplate that this will grow on. My (?) the choosing of my business I have chosen very rightly I think. God knows how far it will go. It is not in my hands. That is the thing sir.

This retirement problem is there you see but in India the tradition follows always if I am a prime minister my son will also become prime minister, that is happening here.

MB. Dynasties.

A. So dynasties here always we are always preferring not from this time but always from the very beginning you see the dynasties we follow. Even in Britain the dynasties follows, in Japan they also follow.

MB. I think its stronger here though in India.

A. Yes because we are more associated with the English people for about say 400 years at least. We were associated with them. So we have also learned something from them say about the dynasties you have Charles and then you have Prince William and then you have Queen Victoria and then Edward and George V and VI like that. You have also these dynasties. So we are also I am in the paper business my son sit there he is having that is the thing here by tradition he will learn more by tradition. So my son will also do this business, I hope so. But if he does not do it. But so far as my hobby business is concerned because my son is not taking any interest in it, that is the interest part of it, because hobby you can not thrust on anybody. But the business is there because he needs money and he wants this business because this flourished business he is getting it as it is. So that he won't leave.

But so far as hobby I concerned I am commercialising my hobby also. So that is why it is you see I am getting interested in it because it is commercialised and I am also getting some good things. But the thing is this if I thrust it to my son, he won't follow it. So after me my business I think will remain but my hobby I am very much doubtful that it will go.

My only child is here and still I can see that he is sitting there in the shop and I hope that he will continue with my business. I hope so. But I can't thrust anybody anything. You have everything you wanted other than this? I think I have given you a lot of information.

MB. Plenty, yes, plenty.

Transcript of an interview with Trader B
24 July 2001

Preliminary comments:

After the interview and the tape recorder was switched off, we spent an hour or more talking. Trader B said it was important that I spoke about, what he called, '*gaddi* mentality'. *Gaddis* are the small 'shop/ office units' that can still be seen in parts of Barabazaar, particularly on Cotton Street. The floor of the *gaddi* is covered with a mattress and white cotton sheet over it, with roll shaped pillows to support the back. One of the few items of furniture is something like a lectern to rest cash ledgers on.

Trader B described how *gaddis* had worked in the past. The *gaddi wallah* would provide accommodation for his extended family in the *gaddi*, as well as food, welfare, and money lending. Relatives who often came from Rajasthan sent most of their money back to their families. In the evenings, inhabitants of the *gaddi* played cards. The traders traded across the whole of India from their *gaddi*, mostly on trust. One per cent of all business transactions in the *gaddi* went towards charity. He described how when his ancestors first came to Barabazaar they were content with just staying in their *gaddi*. Later people expected more, and rented a room to live in, then a flat or house, and eventually they moved out of Barabazaar, altogether.

Trader B also talked about uses of the courtyard in the courtyard house. In the past, they were used not only for fresh air, but also for *adda*, or debates, discussions, and for social occasions like weddings. There was some discussion about the traditional Hindu wedding, and the need to see the sky (of the courtyard) during the ceremony. The bride and groom must take seven steps together, making one vow one after each step, within the sight of fire (?). Now, weddings are held mostly in hotels or special wedding centres.

MB. So, do you own the business?

B. Yes, I own the business, yes.

MB. And, what work do you do?

B. Basically, I am the proprietor of my firm, I do everything from selling, finance, managing and everything.

MB. It's paper?

B. It's paper, I am a merchant of paper and paper books.

MB. It's wholesale and retail?

B. Basically, wholesale.

MB. Did you start the business?

B. No, my father started it, and I took it over from him.

MB. When did you take it over, then?

B. Basically, say twenty years back.

MB. You worked for your father and then you took over?

B. Yes, I worked along with my father, it was his business, he started about fifty years back. So, I worked with him, then I learned his business. So, due to old age he has now retired, so I took it over from him.

MB. One thing I should do, before I forget, is just to write your name down.

B. . . .

MB. And what address is this?

B. . . .

MB. OK, so you said you worked here for twenty years, do you have any other businesses?

B. I don't have any other businesses, but I have several other profession.

MB. Oh, right.

B. I am author of several books, basically, I am a freelance journalist, I contribute to a couple of international magazines.

MB. And you've answered some of these already, you've said you worked here for twenty years, haven't you?

B. Yes, no, now I am here for say about thirty two years.

MB. OK, so did your father start the business?

B. Yes, my father started the business.

MB. When did he start the business?

B. This is a long story, basically, say paper business, say about half a decade back.

MB. OK.

B. Or even more.

MB. Did he, was he living here, or did he move here?

B. No, no, no, he was not living here. He was not living here, basically, he came from after his schooling, he came from a village called Karak (sp?), which is in Hariyana. So he came here, and he had no money, so he got a job over here in a printing press, which is very near by, and he worked there for about twelve years. And then, he set up his own printing business, and as an ancillary to the printing press, letter press, basically it was a letter press. So, he started this papers, because for the last fifteen years, in the last, for the first fifteen years of his career, as he was in the printing press and so he knew about paper. So he came into this business.

MB. And, are the rest of your family involved in similar work?

B. No.

MB. Just you?

B. Yes.

MB. Do they do very different things?

B. Yes.

MB. How many people do you employ?

B. Two only.

MB. And are they related to you at all?

B. No, no.

MB. How old are they?

B. Say, one is say, about fifty years, the other is about thirty years. Both are men.

MB. What do they do, do they just assist you?

B. Just assist.

MB. Could you describe a typical day in your work.

B. Yes, my typical day starts in my office, I am not talking about anything else. My office is say, from nine to seven.

MB. Is that nine in the morning to seven in the evening?

B. Yes.

MB. In here, this is your office?

B. Yes.

MB. And you come from, where's your house, is it nearby?

B. My house is about five kilometres.

MB. In the south of the city?

B. Yes, it is in Park Circus, I come from there.

MB. And what sort of things do you do during the day in the office?

B. Basically, talking to the customers, talking to the suppliers, making payments, making their invoices. Then basically, doing enquiries, attending to the customers, then looking to my finances, other investments, banking. Basically, it is a one man show, I do everything.

MB. And does your work vary at different times of year?

B. More or less, no.

MB. You sell the same amount of paper through the year?

B. Yes, basically, the customers are fixed, basically.

MB. Your suppliers, where do your goods come from, where does your paper come from?

B. Basically, locally. There within a radius of say, fifty kilometres.

MB. Fifteen?

B. Fifty. Five zero.

MB. Why do you use certain suppliers and not others, are they friends or family?

B. Basically, it suits me, because I am alone. I am the sole person working, so it is easier for me to be with only a set of suppliers, and they are all locally. So I don't spend much of my time travelling to them, visiting them, so I can interact with them, basically, on an hourly basis if I want to. They are locally, just a phone call away.

MB. They are people that you know and trust?

B. No, no, basically over a period of time the relationship has developed.

MB. And your customers, why do your customers come to you, do they know you as it were?

B. It's all basically, because the pattern of trading in India is much different than the pattern of trading elsewhere. Here the business has been developed over a period of time, over a period of years. So they know what to expect from me and I know what to expect from them, so that is how the relationship develops. It is basically, if you look, the European pattern has been, the concept today, we talk of personal relationship marketing. But in India we have this concept of relationship marketing. There was no name given to this marketing, but we have this set of marketing for last say about five decades. Because, it is basically one to one, they know me, they know me by my face, they know me by my name, they know my house. Even in odd times when they are disturbed, somebody dies, I don't go and trouble them. They know, even in bad times they can come to me, say I, even I, require finance for my personal use we help them out. The entire thing is based on personal relationship.

MB. And where do your customers come from, are they from local Barabazaar, or all over Calcutta?

B. All over Calcutta. It's not from Barabazaar.

MB. And about networks and trade alliances, I know there are paper, paper trade alliances, but do you belong to any?

B. Yes, yes.

MB. Which?

B. I belong to an alliance locally, also, as well as nationally, also. I have been connected with the organisation for last, more than twenty five years now and I have been a president, secretary. I have been an office bearer in the local associations also, and I have also been a vice-president at the national level, also.

MB. So this is like a business network?

B. Basically in India, the paper trading, we have thirty one organisations in different areas, and they deal in the local matters, and all of them have formed one national organisation, so, which deals with the national matters. So we meet every year, one meeting nationally, then we have smaller meetings on a, in different times.

MB. How do banks, and governments, and local authorities encourage or obstruct your business?

B. It is a very, to answer this question, it is going to take a lot of time, basically. The perceptions differ. To the trading community the banks do not offer any of their services, extraordinarily. It is just basically a simple banking service like clearing of cheques. Now, if a trader really wants finance, the banks normally in India are, they do not have the perception of lending money to the traders, because the government does not back them up. Because the government has it's own social system, whereby they want banks to lend either to the industry, or they want it to be given to the weakest strata of the society. But belonging to the trading community, they say that in their mode of thinking, in their pattern of thinking, the trading

community does not fit in. So the banks are normally disinclined towards financing the trading community as a whole, so they do not want it, to give it to them. That is one.

Now government, if you come to the government, the trading community is not satisfied with the total working of the government, it cannot be. Today, there are more than thirty two laws governing the trade. So, if I have to complete all the formalities, I would require another additional two person to complete those. As a small business man, I am covered with all those paraphernalia.

MB. Paperwork?

B. Yes, big paperwork. Now completing all this is a very tedious, it is not very simple job completing this. Now last ten years, 1991, the government of India started this process of liberalisation, going away with the regulations, going away with the licensing, but this has only been confined to the industry, to the manufacturing sector. This has not come to the trading at all, to the merchanting. So, what happens is, the industry is de-regulated, the manufacturing sector can, is open, they can do. But as a trading community, we are not open, so the restrictions still continue. Now, if the systems is, are not done away with, the laws is not simplified, so the pattern of trading, the merchanting can not improve. So the hindrance is there.

MB. Are the government talking about liberalising trade?

B. No, because in their frame of mind, their perceptions, it's still not there, because the bureaucracy does not want to change. To them trading means, trading community means, basically a parasite on the society. Though, though in India we have one of the finest, low cost, distributive trade which hardly operates at one to two percent. And that is not my figure, it is a figure which is being quoted by the Reserve Bank of India, that the distributive trade hardly operates at one to two percent margin. No where in the entire world, you would not find a distributive trade operating at such a low margin. You just can't believe it, you have a three tier system operating, but you just won't believe that a trader is hardly working at one percent or two percent margin.

MB. But all the traders can't be making those kind of tiny margins?

B. Yes, yes, yes, that is the normal perception, maybe some of them, someone is making ten percent, but then I don't think he is in the common trading pattern, he is something more. But the normal trader, he doesn't make a margin of one to two per cent. That is the normal. And even the RBI, the Reserve Bank of India, when it comes out with it's own economic policy, it has given that the distributive trade in India operates at this margin, at one to two per cent. No where in the world I can, I can tell you, no where in the world you will find a distributive trade operating at this margin.

So, the local authorities again, the problem is you have multiplicity of laws, multiplicity of regulations, which really hinders the trade.

MB. And you've answered some of these as well, your home. . .

B. My home is five kilometres from here.

MB. And do you live with your extended family?

B. What do you mean by the extended family?

MB. Good question. Do you live just, are you married?

B. Yes I am married, my mother and father also stays with me. I have two sons, one of my son is working in States, the other is still studying.

MB. And yes, you are married and yes, you have children. And your children are, they must be in their twenties or something?

B. Yes, as I told you one of my son is in States. He is a manager with KPMG, he is based there, he has been there for last two years, and one is in the final year of graduation.

MB. What's he studying?

B. He's studying B.Com. Honours plus chartered accountant.

MB. So, do you think he will go into this business?

B. I don't know, but I really want my children to be first educated and then join business. That is my perception. If they do it as good, because the days that are there, you will really require a person who is well educated and well versed with the laws that are going to come. So he must first study and then join.

MB. And this is really about the changes in, this is the last page, the changes in the neighbourhood. How many, do you know many of the neighbouring businesses?

B. Yes, I know lot of people, basically.

MB. Because you've been here for so long?

B. Yes, yes, yes.

MB. And, what is the area like at night time?

B. The local area has changed a lot. Because previously, even we were used to, we were living in Barabazaar. So, basically it was like a, if you put it that way, it was an extended, even an extended part of the extended family. People were very close knitted, bad times good times, they used to share with you. So, everybody used to be there and then the convenience was, my place of business and my residence was the same, so I was not losing any time in my transportation. Now, if I have to come from my house I just think the business is done, I can go even after one hour, basically it was not so. Whenever, but it had a disadvantage also. Those days the business was open for twenty four hours, we had no other activity but to be there and be shop assistants. So, those problems are there, but now as people are leaving, because of the lifestyle changes that is taking place, so they want the house, the family, and the businesses are getting separated. So, now they are moving away from this place and they have a different perception about living, so they come only during the working hours. So, in fact, a vacuum is being created, and the area in the night is being taken over by the manual workers basically, labourers, manual workers and the other vices do take place. So, you just can not help it out because, because the vacuum is there.

MB. So before, there was a lot of people living in the area, and so they looked after the area at night time as well, and now they have gone?

B. Yes, yes, that kind of security has now gone.

MB. And this is really about the changes in the neighbourhood, whilst you've been working here. In terms of the use of buildings?

B. The use of buildings has changed, lot of changes have taken place.

MB. How, what changes?

B. See the old structure has, is slowly going away, because people want it for their own use, the place has become costlier. So all those decorated, which was there outside, the carving on the stones has fallen because of the say weather conditions, misuse, and the change of use also, the pattern, because now everybody wants to have more space, so all those

corridors, all those verandas are being put into commercial use. So, that beauty basically, if you, if you are looking to the heritage conditions or the beauty portion, it's all gone. Because now it is more of a commercial sector, every foot counts.

MB. People can't afford to, or they have different priorities now?

B. Yes, yes, absolutely.

MB. And new structures?

B. New structures legal and illegal, both have cropped up. You just can't go away with that, because, every day it happens.

MB. Because there are so many more people coming in?

B. No, no, basically, the residential usage is coming down. That is reflected in the voting pattern also, so the people have moved out for residential, residential purposes. Now, previously if you go back say about three decades, four decades, or five decades back, people had their family in the villages, so they were living together in one room, five or six people, or seven people, so that was the type of living over here, so they used to go occasionally. Now, as people have got more educated, the second and the third generations, it's coming in. So, people don't want to stay together, this is not suitable because the water is not available, the toilet conditions are not there. So, those who have got educated, they are just going out, they are going further off from the main Barabazaar. So, those rooms which are now getting vacant are being used more for commercial purposes, either for offices or for storage, other than living. So, the usage has changed.

MB. And it sounds as though the social life will have changed as well?

B. It has, it has automatically because the families are not there, the friendship has changed because people don't have the kind of friendship that was existing, the fellowship that was extending. Because, if six people were living together for twenty four hours, they had different kind of a friendship level, their fellowship was much different. Now, because they only remain there for a couple of hours, and they are busy with their own work they don't find time.

MB. And similarly cultural activities as well, presumably?

B. Yes, yes, absolutely. Because people are more active in their place of residency. So that kind of thing is not, now.

MB. So when did you, when did you move out of Barabazaar?

B. We moved out in 1964.

MB. Oh, right, so it's a long time ago.

B. Yes.

MB. Just before, just before I was born! And crime and policing?

B. As I told you, basically the vacuum is there. Once, you go out in the night, it is just left to the outsiders to do. And the crime rates have increased, whatever the figures the government might quote, and with the inadequate police force, you can not expect them to make police rounds. So the problems, law and order problems, all these things are there.

MB. So, has your shop ever been broken into?

B. No, touch wood, it has never happened.

MB. And what about the availability of goods and services round here?

B. Look, goods and services, basically, availability of goods and services in Barabazaar, basically, if you look to that, it has also changed. Previously, we used to have handcarts, people pulling those handcarts, rickshaws. Now, the streets are very narrow and those handcarts are now going out, or particularly have gone out, so now you have cycle vans. And then small trucks, small Tempos, four wheelers have come in. But then again, the problem is you don't have the space of, for parking, you don't have the space for pedestrian walking even, because the hawkers they have now taken over the roads. So, services, sanitation services are very poor, for people coming from outside you don't have lavatories, public lavatories, so it is a big problem. Drinking water is a big problem, because the roads are congested, you don't have, it's not very easy for women folk to walk, the men folk, we can just squeeze ourselves up. So, lot of problem, basically.

MB. And you just mentioned about sanitation?

B. Sanitation, no, it's not.

MB. And you've also talked about this, the market, people moving out of the area, residences being less. . .

B. It is more, it is more commercialising. So, the residential use has dropping at a very fast rate.

MB. And pollution, as well?

B. Pollution, normally, because it is commercialised, so pollution is not there to that extent. But during the winters, the manual, the labourers, they have this, what we call earthenware, they burn coal, or they burn wood, so that creates pollution during the three months basically, say November, December, January, there is some kind of a chill in the weather. So, that time the pollution is much more.

MB. I suppose, I mean, I've noticed the pollution on the major streets, like Brabourne Road here.

B. Brabourne Road is much more than you will find on this street, it's much cleaner. Because there you see the public transportation, that creates much more.

MB. And so there would be fires, the manual workers, they have fires in these little lanes?

B. Yes, yes. They just put the fire on the road, and that creates, because of the weather conditions, the dew remaining there, and the humidity, the air it doesn't go.

MB. So, there's no wind.

B. No wind.

MB. And then again, you've talked about traffic and congestion, and what about noise?

B. Noise, if you go.

MB. Has it got worse?

B. Yes, it's tolerable basically, because once you are inside these streets, it's normal human talking with each other. So, that kind of a noise is not there, but if you are out on the main roads, the noise is, the decibel level is much higher because of the transportation system.

MB. The only other noise I've noticed when I've been here is the bell, the temple bell.

B. No, no, that is religious sentiment, but it happens only twice a day, and there to, for a couple of minutes, one minute say about twelve, for one minute at seven. So, otherwise, that kind of a pitch.

MB. And then, and you've mentioned briefly street vendors and hawkers?

B. Yes, this has become a very major issue, and it is more of a political issue. And the streets vendors and hawkers, because they don't pay taxes, they do not have to pay any tax, it creates a lot of problem and unhealthy competition, for the shop keepers also. Because these street vendors and hawkers, what they have done is, they have obstructed the fascia, basically of the shops, so that prevents the buyers to come into the shops also, and they hawk their goods. Now, a shopkeeper pays taxes, sales tax, income tax, rent as well, and they don't have to pay anything, except for the weekly payment to the police or to the local musclemen. So the, basically it creates lot of social problems, and due to the, there is no political will to look into this. Because in fact, these are the vote banks for the political parties. So, that creates lot of political problems.

MB. When I was here last year there was various police operations to move street vendors.

B. Now, again they have come back, because if you see the elections are there, so they would be allowed to come back, as I told you they are the vote banks, so they vote for a political party. So, if you have the political protection, if you have the protection from the local law and order authority, and from the local musclemen, so that protection is not available to any shop keeper, so he is just helpless, he can not do anything. And then his vote is not there in the area, because he is not residing there.

MB. And, this is a bit more difficult, what do you see as the future of your business?

B. It's not difficult, it is much easier to put it that way. You see my future depends on some factors, basically. The government is not assisting the trading community, that is number one. The government is not opening up the trading community because, it is not doing away with the regulations, that is the other. And then, the problem lies with the system, the manufacturers and the traders. Now to be really competitive, I can not be, because the manufacturers are now inclining towards more direct sales, they want to go directly to the customer. So, as a trader I am the middle man. If they go directly to the customers themselves, I lose my business. Now what they do is, the manufacturers today are doing is, they go directly to the customer, and then they quote them a different price, which is much lower at what they are giving. So if this trend actually continues, I can not operate, so my future looks bleak. And then I am not a trader anymore, I do not consider myself to be a trader or a merchant.

Basically, the perception of, as a trader or the outlook is changing, I am a more service provider, because I am not only selling, I am providing lot more services. Basically, I will put it, I am providing him banking, finance, I give him credit, the manufacturer doesn't give him. I give him the risk management insurance, if you are not understood I will tell you. Because I know at what time the prices are going to shoot up, I take that risk, I book the material, and then I take it to the customer. So, that insure his risks for the price volatility. Then I give him the logistic support, that includes the transportation, I am providing him warehousing, and I provide basically personal relationship, even I entertain him to get my business. So, I am more of a service provider than I am a marketing service. And my margins are very low, nobody can compete with me, because if my costs to me, if I, I don't keep it to my barest minimum, I would not be able to sustain it.

MB. The manufacturers, surely can't offer that kind of service, they don't have those sorts of expertise, do they?

B. No, no, they have that kind of expertise, because I can not compete. Now if the government does away with the regulation, because today imports are open, but the duties are very high. Now, once the duties are high, the manufacturer gets a protection to that amount. Today, the

import duties on paper today, are at a level of sixty three per cent. So I just can not import, say X price and I pay duty sixty three, so it is X into sixty three, basically. So, the domestic manufacturer is getting a protection of about sixty three per cent. How can I compete, I just can not compete with it. But once say, in future, 2010, once the duties go away, then these manufacturers will not be able to compete, because my services will be much open.

MB. I'm sure as well that, it costs much less for Indian paper makers to make paper, than it does for paper maker outside India.

B. No.

MB. No?

B. Indian paper makers can not be competitive in true sense, because there is nothing, there is not a single factor, which makes the Indian paper maker healthy to make paper in India. It is a very negative statement I will say. But if you look to the paper industry as a whole, the first factor is that you must have adequate raw materials, that is the fibre. Fibre availability in India is not there, we don't have pine wood. We don't have wood, because the land to forest ratio in India is one of the poorest, we hardly have about 5.5 percent of forests, now even those are protected. So we don't have the fibre, and not only fibre, the required kind of fibre, we don't have long fibre, forests are not there. And then we don't have wood, so you don't have the fibre to make. Then the infrastructure is not available, the right kind of infrastructure, then the right kind of chemicals are not there. Then you only have the man power, that is the only plus point. Now even in the finance, the outside, if you look to the Europe and the other countries, the rate of interest is much lower, say in America it will be anything about three to five, or in Japan it could be say about one per cent or so. The rate of interest now, say about one year back, the rate of interest was about eighteen to twenty four per cent, even today, they are prevailing between twelve to sixteen per cent. So, with that kind of, paper industry is basically a very highly capital intensive industry, it requires a lot of finances. Then technology, we don't have the kind of technology, we are all basically having second hand machineries, and technologically, obsolescence is very high, we buy old machines, we are running on the old same pattern, pollution, effluent, basically fibre, we just can't control.

MB. And what do you think will happen to the business when you retire?

B. As I already told it to you, I have only two sons. One of my sons is in States, he is a manager with KPMG, he is altogether into a different line, so I don't think he is going to come and sit here.

MB. What do KPMG do?

B. KPMG is Keith Pete Maverick (?), they are one of the five biggest accounting and consulting firms in the world. So, he's into software implementation, he's a certified SRP consultant, ERP consultant you say. So, he's into software implementation, my second son is studying. Frankly, you would put it, I would not allow him to come, and do all this hassle all time. But it all depends on the almighty.

MB. Right that's it, that is all, that was very useful.

Transcript of an interview with Trader C

24 July 2001

Preliminary comments:

A little reticent perhaps trader C was in his 30's and there was the usual post-interview chat. He was generally pretty negative about everything and trader A was trying to be positive as is his way. He said you can get what ever you want in Barabazaar, tea coffee, sweets anything. Trader C mentioned the prostitutes in Sonagachi immediately to the north of Barabazaar, which had completely passed me by. There was talk about what a good money-making place this was and how a room opening onto the lane could get 50 Lakh Rupees. They talked about how much the tea people and the sweet people made, the latter 25, 000 Rupees per day. There was a bit of a discussion about the pros and cons of arranged marriages and trader C, himself married, showed me a picture of his girlfriend in Mumbai. He had very much that feel of the south Calcutta set.

MB. Do you own this business?

C. Yes.

MB. Right, what work do you do?

C. We are distributors for Orient Paper Mills and (?) Paper Mills. We are into the paper trade basically.

MB. Your distributors what?

C. Paper.

MB. Right, did you start the business?

C. No, my forefathers did.

MB. Who started the business?

C. My great-grandfather.

MB. And when did he start?

C. Say around 1950.

MB. Right, and do you have any other businesses?

C. We have an ampule manufacturing unit.

MB. Ampule?

C. Ampules are small glass bottles in which you have those medicines.

MB. How long have you worked here?

C. In this office?

MB. Yes.

C. I've been here for the last fifteen years.

MB. Right, so the business has been passed down to you has it?

C. Yes.

MB. From your father?

C. From my father.

MB. So does your father still work here or has he retired?

C. He has more or less retired.

MB. More or less.

C. Yes more or less. He just comes here once in a while and takes the bearings what is happening actually and then goes back.

MB. And are the rest of your family involved in this business?

C. No just me.

MB. And what about the rest of your family how many brothers and sisters do you have.

C. I have just one brother, so sisters. My brother is looking after that ampule manufacturing unit and I'm looking after this business.

MB. And how many people do you employ?

C. About say ten.

MB. What sort of work do they do?

C. One or two in the accounts department, two or three in the sales department, and bearers and (?) and so on.

MB. The people you employ are they family members?

C. No.

MB. What sort of ages are they?

C. They are from the age group thirty, from thirty to fifty.

MB. Are they all men?

C. Not everyone is old but we have young people also.

MB. Are they all male?

C. Yes all male.

MB. About your typical working day. Can you describe what you do in the day?

C. During the day?

MB. Yes what time you get here.

C. I come here at around say eleven and finish my banking. The first job in the day is banking. Whatever I have to do with the bank I do. After that I look into the purchases, sales, talk to people and go back home at six.

MB. Where is your home.

C. My home is in Balyganj.

MB. Does the work vary, at different times of the year?

C. No, we have more or less fixed times.

MB. Where do you get your goods from?

C. From Orient Paper Mills, Orient Paper Mills, that is in Orissa.

MB. Just only from there?

C. And (?) Paper Mills in Madhya Pradesh.

MB. Why do you use these suppliers and not others? Are they people you have got to know over time?

C. I don't get you.

MB. The paper mills that you use, why do you use those paper mills?

C. Because my forefathers have been working with them, we have set a relation with them, that is why.

MB. About you customers, why do your customers come to you?

C. The thing, relationship.

MB. And they come to you, they come to the business when your grandfather was running it, and your father?

C. Yes more or less my customers are from my generation. I have developed a few, but major chunk of my customers are very old.

MB. Where do your customers come from?

C. They are basically from Calcutta only.

MB. All over Calcutta?

C. Yes, all over Calcutta.

MB. In terms of, there's a paper trade alliance, are you a member?

C. I am a member of that.

MB. This is about banks and governments and local authorities, and how you see then encouraging or obstructing your business.

C. I would not say they are obstructing my business, but they are not helping me in many ways also.

MB. What about banks?

C. Banks they are helping me, but we have got a good relationship with the bankers, and they do help us at times. We do not have a permanent OD limit or anything of that kind. But at times you do need the bank to help you out in a tight spot.

MB. So when you say they help you out they lend you money or whatever?

C. Yes. Accommodate me for a few days.

MB. What about the government?

C. The government doesn't do anything for us. The government only knows how to take money from us, they don't do anything.

MB. What about the local authority, the municipal authority?

C. They're even worse.

MB. Why are they worse?

C. Because I see their faces only at the times of elections. For five years then I don't see their faces.

MB. They're just coming to ask you to vote?

C. They want the vote.

MB. do they slow your business down?

C. They are not obstructing my business but they are not helping me also.

MB. Your home is in Balyganj, who do you live with there, are you married?

C. I am married, we have a joint family.

MB. So your parents live there?

C. My parents live there, my brother lives there, and myself also lives there.

MB. Do you have children?

C. Yes I have two.

MB. How old are they?

C. My daughter is eleven and my son is seven.

MB. So they are presumably both at school?

C. Yes both are at school.

MB. This is just about the local neighbourhood and how things have changed. First of all do you know many of the neighbouring businesses?

C. Yes probably I know all of them.

MB. All of them on Synagogue Street.

C. Yes, yes

MB. China Bazaar Street?

C. All China Bazaar Street, Jackson Lane, Synagogue Street I know probably many people over there.

MB. This is really about the changes in the neighbourhood during the time you have been working here. What about the uses of buildings have they changed?

C. No. I have seen it remaining the same for the last fifteen years there has been no changes.

MB. What about structures, new structures?

C. No new structures have come up except this building city centre over here.

MB. Which building is this?

C. City centre, Central Bank, so there are not many new constructions coming up in this area because there is no space, and the old buildings which are in a dilapidated condition, and which can be afforded to be pulled down and make a new building over there, it's not possible because of tenants and other problems, many other problems.

MB. What about social life, has that changed?

C. Social life in Calcutta has changed, it has changed to a great extent. Fifteen years back Calcutta did not have even a single discotheque. Today we have at least five or six of them. Restaurants have come up, clubbing activities have improved quite a lot, and that's it.

MB. Have you lived in Balyganj all your life?

C. Practically all my life. I have never lived in Barabazaar.

MB. Is there a social life here in Barabazaar or is most of your social life in Balyganj?

C. My social life is in Balyganj definitely.

MB. And presumably the cultural activities the clubs and what not.

C. All are in south Calcutta.

MB. What about crime and policing in the area, has that changed?

SK. Crime, crime rate is probably going up in Calcutta in the past few years.

MB. What about this area?

C. This area it is going up even more, because population in India is going up every day and job opportunities do not come as fast as the population is going up. So when there is unemployment, there is bound to be more of crime, because everyone needs to fill his stomach. If he can't earn it he'll steal it.

MB. Have you ever been burgled here?

C. No, I have not had any personal misfortune thanks at all. But we keep hearing we keep reading on the newspapers that someone has been caught and things of this kind.

MB. What about the availability of goods and services in this area, has that changed?

C. No. Availability of goods and services in this area has never been bad, because this being the hub of the business community in Calcutta, you can probably get anything anytime of the day. And services well you can get people no problem.

MB. And things like electricity, water and things like that?

C. Water is a problem, electricity is no problem. Water is still a problem in this building we don't have any water.

MB. But when people do have it is there a problem with the pressure?

C. It's the pressure, pressure. Quality, we have a tap behind the building but there is no pressure in the tap so the water doesn't come.

MB. Sanitation?

C. Sanitation, we don't have toilets in the building and whatever two small toilets we have this building doesn't have any gates or anything. It is used by the public, it is a public toilet you can imagine how they are.

MB. I've just seen the ground floor of this building, do you own the whole building?

C. No, no, this is just one office I own. We are renting in to here. We do not own this premises we are just tenants.

MB. And the market, the actual commercialisation of the market. I was talking before and it seems as though the amount of people living here has gone down and the amount of businesses has increased.

C. Yes, if you lately say in the last one and a half decades, have been trying, whosoever gets the opportunity likes to move out to South Calcutta, and keep there business here. They don't want to keep there residence in Barabazaar, because Barabazaar practically doesn't have any social life. There no good restaurants in Barabazaar, no good cinema halls in Barabazaar, no good theatres in Barabazaar, no clubs in Barabazaar. So for social life they would like to shift to the south, because nothing has been done for the development of Barabazaar.

MB. Pollution, do you think that's . . .

C. Pollution is bad, it's really bad in Barabazaar. Entire Calcutta pollution is there, but Barabazaar is worse.

MB. When you come onto the smaller lanes where there are no cars, it's quite clean.

C. Where?

MB. Like Synagogue Street here.

C. Because there is no cars over here. But if there is no cars then you find that this place this lane, Synagogue Street lane it's never cleaned also.

MB. You mean the street is never washed?

C. It's never washed, it's never repaired. If you have pot holes they remain like that for years and years, and then one fine morning say in three or four years you find the CMC people working on that. That is also because elections are coming up. Noise pollution is graver.

MB. Just from traffic and things?

C. Traffic and people also. People also are not well educated, they'll keep shouting on the roofs. If you have an office which has an opening towards the road you probably can not work unless your gates are closed. We are sitting inside in a fine lane and all our office doors are closed we have air-conditioning on. So you do not get the noise from outside, otherwise it's impossible to work.

MB. Street vendors and hawkers, has that changed?

C. No.

MB. What I meant was are there more of them of them now or less?

C. There are more of hawkers on the street. If you walk on Brabourne Road, probably you can't walk on the footpath because it's filled with hawkers.

MB. In Synagogue Street it's not so bad.

C. It's not so bad but still on Synagogue Street also you will find a few hawkers sitting they have encroached from the road. If these hawkers weren't there probably you would get more space to move around, but today it's so bad if you want to walk down China Bazaar, it's very difficult.

MB. What do you see as the future of your business?

C. Bleak. Yes the paper market is on the down slide, so we do not see very good future in the paper market. We are thinking of diversifying, we have diversified.

MB. Doing what?

C. I am thinking of opening a travel agency, because people nowadays like to travel a lot for holidays or for business. I have just started it say a week back, and then I had a small accident in my office there was a fire, so today is the first day after the fire I have sat down in my office.

MB. Where are you situating that business?

C. No we will do it from this office, I'll book tickets, say you want to go to Delhi, he calls me up give me a ticket of Delhi, I'll give him a ticket of Delhi. We are trying to do that, I do not know how far I will be successful but I will make an attempt.

MB. So you will see how well that goes, and if it goes well . . .

C. If it goes well I'll probably open a branch in Balyganj also, because it's not possible to feed everyone from Barabazaar. So Balyganj being more centrally located it is easier to feed.

MB. When you mean feed . . .

C. Feed means you deliver tickets on time.

MB. I see what you mean.

C. So sending a person from Barabazaar to Alipur will take me probably forty five minutes but from Balyganj to Alipur it takes hardly fifteen minutes. So probably later on I will open a branch over there.

MB. That's where most of your market will be?

C. Yes, I don't expect much business from Barabazaar.

MB. Maybe this is not so relevant, do you know what will happen to the business when you retire? It maybe a long time off.

C. My son will take over. I hope so because things in India is also changing. Sons do not want to follow into the footsteps of the fathers, but with growing education they would like if he wants to change his line wants to become a professional I won't mind. Then I'll close down my business because I want to retire.

MB. That's it that's all.

C. Thank you.

MB. Thank you.

Transcript of an interview with Trader D
10 April 2003

Preliminary comments:

I was introduced to Trader D by Trader A, who did not speak much English but Trader A translated. Trader D was 75 years old, had recently suffered a stroke, and was now only working 3-4 hours per day in the afternoon. He also rented a shop in Trader A's house and had several *godowns* in the area - one immediately behind his shop. The shop was extremely busy and crowded during the interview. As we were interviewing a porter arrived with a load of paper on his head, which was packed into a space above the shop. Trader D was not terribly forthcoming - whether this was as a result of the difficulty in language or the busy nature of the shop or because we had turned up (I think) unannounced I don't know.

MB. Does he own the business?

A. In business how long?

MB. I'll tell you what I'll just write his name down

A. Yes, his name is . . . His place is (?) paper market

MB. What address is this? What number?

A. This is Old China Bazaar Street. . . . So he is in this street from 1955.

MB. Did you start this business or was it passed down by his father?

A. No he started the business.

MB. Does he have any other businesses?

A. His sons, two sons are in other business.

MLB. Three sons.

A. Yes, three sons. Two here and one at Delhi. They are doing other business like machine plastic materials and one is in paper trade.

MLB. Cigarettes.

A. Cigarette manufacturing.

MB. How many people are employed here?

A. Eight.

MB. This is the day to day activity. What time does he open? What's his daily activity?

A. He opens at eleven and closes at seven - seven thirty.

MB. Does he live here? Does he live in China Bazaar Street or does he live elsewhere?

A. He is living elsewhere. He comes from there and opens his shop at eleven.

MB. Where does he live?

D. Balyganj, Park Road.

MB. Where do you get your paper from?

A. He is a distributor (p?) of paper mills, of Puna. The paper is coming from there, and also he deals in locally made papers.

MB. Why does he use those suppliers? Is it through family friends? Has he had a long relationship with the paper mills?

A. Yes he has had a long association with the paper mill at Puna.

D. 1970.

A. He is associated with that Puna mill since 1970. And he is also distributor of a local paper mill, and also trevencor rail (?), Kerala. So he is opening paper from all three (?) and selling it here in his shop.

MB. Where do his customers come from? Are they just from this area or all over Calcutta?

A. From outside also.

MB. His children have they all left home? They are not living with him any more?

A. There are two children living with him, and one is at Delhi.

MB. Does he know many of the businesses in the area?

A. Yes, yes, he knows each and every because he is working for last sixty years, so he is in contact with all.

MB. This is the changes he might have seen, over the sixty years - has there been many changes?

D. No change.

MB. No change?

A. (Laughter) He finds nothing.

MB. Not even . . .

D. Only customers are more and more.

A. More customers he's getting.

MB. Businesses must have changed hands as well - there must be new people running the businesses around now.

A. He says that by coming more and more people in this line, I am not affected

MB. So has he ever lived in the area?

A. Previously he was living here in Old China Bazaar Street, very near to his shop.

MB. Have cultural activities changed with more people moving into the area for business - has the social life changed?

A. Nowadays the people have become very narrow minded. Previously they were very broad minded now they have generally become narrow minded.

MB. What does he mean by that?

A. Narrow minded he means mixing is less.

MB. People come here to work then go away they don't mix so much?

A. No the people only three, four persons come here, he just entertain them, and he comes from his house and goes straight (?)

MB. What does he see as the future of his business? Will his son take it over?

A. Whether his son will work or not because they are already in other business. So he is in doubt whether it will be continued or not.

D. My two grandsons already work in (?) - no chance at all.

A. He says no chance because his grandchildren have also gone abroad for higher studies so they might not be doing this work. Anything else?

MB. I was just interested in the changes in the area, but it doesn't sound as though there has been any.

A. Actually speaking his business from mills he is getting the material, and for the last many years he is getting it, so there is no substantial change. Because he is the distributor.

MB. So is it still as busy as it was, because I heard there were problems with the paper industry. Is it starting to turn down the business?

A. It has gone up. The business volume has increased. He says, the population has increased therefore my business has also increased. He's happy with the business. Only thing he says that after him there will not be any family member who can run the business.

MB. So what will happen to the business?

D. This is not my headache.

A. This is not my headache, he says what will happen after me he says I don't have to bother about it. He's very happy man, why should he have to bother with it?

D. This is not my headache.

A. He says this is not my headache, whether anybody will run my business or not, I am not at all interested in that. Okay. The tea you have to take.

Transcript of an interview with Trader E

10 April 2003

Preliminary comments:

Trader E was another friend of Trader A's, and had an office in a small lane off Old China Bazaar Street. It was the very traditional Gaddi set-up. There was one brother manning the phones, and as we were about to start the interview, two other brothers arrived, who had been out, 'procuring business,' as they put it. This was the classic extended family business. People would come and take goods, payment would be collected later - nothing was priced but it was all noted down. There were no credit cards, only cash.

MB. Do you own the business?

E. Yes, this is my own business.

MB. And what work do you do?

E. Because I am the business manager, we are selling and buying the materials from outside. We are selling the materials in local Calcutta as well as outside.

MB. So, did you start the business?

E. My father has started this business. I am continuing this business, for so many years, you can say for 25 years I am in business.

MB. Do you have any other businesses?

E. Yes, apart from this I have (?) business, manufacturing of the ladies garments.

MB. Womens' clothes.

E. Nearby Daramtola Street, in Barabazaar.

MB. You mean clothes ready made garments?

E. Yes we are manufacturing shirts also here.

MB. So you said you worked here was it 25 years?

E. Yes I am in business for last 25 years, because we are dealing in paper, so we know all the ins and outs of paper houses, paper mills, regarding paper I know all the things.

MB. And your father passed it down.

E. Yes my father is in the business, I am also, my younger brother also in this business.

MB. When did your father start the business?

E. Yes my father has started the business in 1956.

MB. You said there is another brother who works in the business.

E. Yes my younger brother is also with me.

MB. Do you have any other brothers or sisters?

E. Yes, altogether we are four brothers and one sister. One sister has been married. My elder brother is in Delhi, he is also doing business. My youngest sister is in (?) government, and my youngest brother is. . .

MB. How many people do you employ?

E. Seven.

MB. Here?

E. Here three, four other places.

MB. At the garment place.

E. Yes.

MB. Okay. This is just a typical day in your work.

E. Daily routine.

MB. Okay, so when do you open the business, when do you arrive here?

E. I open the business at ten-thirty. Ten thirty to eight o'clock.

MB. It's a long day, and what sort of work are you doing here?

E. We are the dealer of many various paper mill, we are selling the materials, the consumers, as well as tradables.

MB. So it's wholesale and retail?

E. We are the wholesaler, you can say we are the wholesaler.

MB. No retail?

E. No, no.

MB. Is there any variation through the year?

E. No, no.

MB. Just the same?

E. Same.

MB. And where do you get your paper?

E. The goods I get from outside Calcutta, our mills are outside Calcutta (?) and Andra Pradesh, we are getting materials from them.

MB. So are you an agent for a mill.

E. Yes.

MB. Which mill is that?

E. Andra Pradesh paper mills, in Gujarat, (?) paper mills.

MB. The paper mills, the suppliers, that you use, have you used them for a long time?

E. Yes, because we are the materials from outside Calcutta and we are selling them to our customers.

MB. But have you developed a long relationship with them?

E. Obviously, I have developed so many corporate sectors, The Statesman, Telegraph, and very big publishers also.

MB. Okay so these are some of your customers?

E. They are all valued customers.

MB. Your customers are big corporate customers, rather than the small ones.

E. Some are smaller customers. We are selling materials to corporate customers as well as smaller ones.

MB. Is most of your business to corporate customers?

E. Yes.

MB. So why do they come to you? Have they known you for a long time?

E. Yes.

MB. Did your father did he develop those customers.

E. No myself, I developed.

MB. You don't live in Barabazaar do you?

E. Nearby, Howrah.

MB. Did your family live here originally, or have they always lived outside Barabazaar?

E. Yes outside Barabazaar.

MB. Did you ever live here?

E. No, no.

MB. Are you married?

E. Obviously (Laughter).

MB. Do you have children?

E. Yes I have two boys and one girls.

MB. This is about the local neighbourhood.

E. Yes the neighbourhood, all the businessmen are my neighbours.

MB. So you know most of the businesses around, in this block?

E. Yes.

MB. So the area at night time.

E. I go to home. This is very lonely.

MB. Is it very quiet?

E. The centre. Everyone goes after eight, eight thirty PM.

MB. What about changes in the neighbourhood during the time you have been working here?

E. No, no, nothing, no changes at all. Because in day time it is very congested area daytime because it is the heart of the city.

MB. But it must have got in the thirty years or twenty five years it must have got busier here.

E. Yes it is very much busier. All the people look in Barabazaar, you know the heart, this is the heart of the city.

MB. And there is a lot more people living here and working here so in that sense things must have changed. It's much more thickly populated now.

E. Obviously, because the main centre of Calcutta, many peoples are coming from suburban areas to do their business to get their materials from Calcutta and then they went back in the evening at their home.

MB. So you think the business side of things hasn't changed?

E. It has maybe developed from last twenty years.

MB. So the building uses have stayed the same have they?

E. No building uses have changed in commercial, all the big buildings have become commercial, all business. Some they have come residential, because I want to live outside Barabazaar.

MB. Has there been any more structures?

E. No Structures. Because no places left to build on.

MB. And has the social life changed?

E. Cost of life is very good. Because we are getting our fellow nearby in Barabazaar. We are enjoying ourselves, we are not going outside for our enjoyment, from time to time.

MB. What type of entertainment happens here?

E. In Barabazaar we are getting so much we are talking, we are also playing the club, indoor games.

MB. Does the Paper Traders Association organise anything?

E. Yes Paper Traders Association we have more than 300 members.

MB. Is that in this local area?

E. All nearby Barabazaar area.

MB. And does that organise social activities as well?

E. We are doing two times a year, a Holi get together and a Diwali get together. We are assembling at a place, and we are enjoying, and we are also taking our meal and entertainment. We also imagine one garden party, in our association, once a year. You get to meet all the traders at one place.

MB. And has crime changed at all?

E. At Barabazaar you will find that crime is very little, in Barabazaar.

MB. You have already mentioned that it has become more commercial.

E. Obviously, first I told you that the business centre is in Calcutta, Barabazaar is the heart of the city.

MB. What about traffic congestion?

E. Since summer days the police are controlling the traffic also. Earlier it was very much congested now they are trying to with the traffic rules.

MB. What about the street vendors and the hawkers?

E. Very common problem in Calcutta, the hawkers, some are also sitting beside the road, and they are also getting their (?) it can not be.

MB. And just about the future of the business, what do you see as the future of your business?

E. In Calcutta, future definitely bright.

MB. Business is getting better? And something perhaps a long way ahead but do you know when you retire?

E. Yes my children will inherit this business, when I become retired.

MB. Are your children quite young?

E. Yes because he will look after this business.

MB. If your children are quite young they probably don't know what they will do when they get older do they.

E. In this community when I build up this building once we have to look after this building then the businessman draw his business, one should be (?)

MB. So you think they will continue with the business.

E. Oh yes.

A. He hopes so, but how he can tell, but these are the kids (laughter).

Interview with Trader F

10 April 2003

Preliminary comments:

Trader F had just taken over the business from his father and partner who had both just recently died.

MB. Do you own the business?

F. Yes.

MB. What work do you do here?

F. Trading business – trading paper.

MB. Is it just wholesale?

F. Wholesale.

MB. Any retail?

F. No, no other business. Retail, wholesale both you can say.

MB. Okay. You inherited the business?

F. Yes from my father.

MB. Okay, and you don't have any other businesses?

F. No other business, but my younger brother is doing the cloth business in Agra.

MB. Okay, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

F. Three brothers, three sisters.

MB. And is the third brother involved in this business?

F. Two brothers are here one in Agra, two are here.

MB. So the third brother . . .

F. I am the elder brother, and second one is in Agra, and the youngest is here.

MB. Also in this business?

F. Same business.

MB. Okay, and how long have you worked in this business.

F. I am since last more than twenty years and my father started in 1951. It's more than fifty two years like that.

MB. How many people do you employ?

F. Only one.

MB. In a typical day, what time do you open the business here.

F. We start at around about 11 am to 7 p.m.

MB. Do you live in Barabazaar?

F. No, no I am in south, Ballyganj.

MB. Okay so you come from Ballyganj to here.

F. That is about five kilometres from here.

MB. What time does the business finish?

F. About seven.

MB. And does the work vary through the year or is it all the same? Is it the same volume of business, the same level of business?

F. No, no it is increasing, the level it is increasing.

MB. Increasing getting more? Why is it getting more? Is there just more people coming to buy stuff?

F. Correct.

MB. And where does your paper come from?

F. We are importing papers from Bangalore, near (?), in southern India.

MB. Is this from a paper mill?

A. From South India there is a paper mill, he is bringing the paper from there from south India.

F. Mill is near Bangalore, 250 Km from Bangalore, that mill is there.

MB. What is the name of the mill?

F. Commercial Paper Mills.

MB. Have you been using this mill for a long time?

F. Last ten years, more than ten years, twelve years.

MB. So where you getting your supplies from another mill before?

F. Before that we were getting materials from Orissa.

MB. So what was the reason for changing paper mills?

F. With them we are in the trade, they have closed their business, with that we have changed our business to this mill.

A. That mill is closed.

MB. And your customers, where do they come from? Is it just this area or all over Calcutta?

F. Calcutta, North Bengal, like that, sometimes come from the (?) also.

MB. So you live in Balyganj, and are you married?

F. Yes.

MB. How many children do you have?

F. Two.

MB. Are they quite young?

F. One nineteen years old, he is my son, and fifteen years my daughter.

MB. So they are not quite young.

A. Grown up.

MB. Yes grown up. Just about the local neighbourhood, and how things have changed or have not - do you know a lot of neighbouring businesses?

F. Why not?

A. He knows.

MB. All of them or most of them in this area?

F. Yes, yes.

MB. In terms of the changes in the street – have there been any changes in the use of the buildings since you have been working here?

F. What is the changes? I think there is no changes in this area.

MB. It has always been the same paper traders or businesses?

A. Only the faces change.

F. No, no faces are you can say the fathers generation is going on, that is new generation is coming on, but no new commercial come in this business. More or less the same.

A. What he means to say is that in vicinity or surrounding area, there is no change in the buildings, and the business is always by inheritance. The new people not coming in this business.

F. You can say no newcomers can fix their feet here.

MB. So it's the same families.

F. Same families running this business, with less or more whatever it is.

MB. And the social life is that different now or has it changed?

F. Social life you can say it depends upon the nature of the person, how much they can mix up with others, because nobody has so much time so that they can sit together and argue. Everybody is busy you can say.

MB. Have you ever lived in Barabazaar or always in Balyganj?

F. No, no earlier I was in Barabazaar, I have shifted there in 1988.

MB. So when you lived in Barabazaar was the social life different to your social life in Balyganj?

F. Difference was there. Some difference was there, north and south you will find some difference, that difference was there.

MB. Which do you prefer, the north or the south?

F. Noise you can say, here is so much noise, there is peace and calm. Barabazaar, you can say the basic difference is there.

A. This is not now the area for residing. What he means to say is that it has become crowded.

F, You can say like that, this area has become commercialised, and the south section you can say that has become residential. And in future you will see that more congestion will be here in Barabazaar, every building will be commercialised. Like in this building now here is in the first floor is the office, and then in future you will see whole building will be commercialised.

A. This building is mixed up.

MB. Is there people living here?

A. People living up the stairs. Ground floor is shops, first floor are offices, and second and third and other without any lift this building is nine or ten . . .

F. More than fifty years my father came here at that time this building was six, ground plus six. Actually there was no provision for the lift. Now the day has come after four within four we are using the lift.

MB. Top four floors, there are people living there?

F. Yes, yes. They are using the staircase, that's why their health was good. There will be no heart problem.

MB. I know, in India people walk a lot more than in Europe.

F. No now people become conscious about their health.

MB. Do you think that crime levels have changed here?

F. Crime it is on the upper side.

MB. You read about it in the papers but . . you haven't been burgled or had anything stolen from you?

F. no, no.

MB. You've already said that the market has become more commercial, what about traffic has that . . .?

F. It has improved, it has been improved, there is no traffic congestion like that, like before, because signals are there, everyone is following the rules.

MB. And the street vendors, the hawkers?

F. The street vendors are there because it is very, you can say, you can not remove them so easily. There are so many people there to spend their life, if you think, but you can not remove them.

MB. About the future of the business?

F. It's very good, paper business is going upward, future is very bright because known population is there every time it is increasing and they will use the paper, without using paper you can not run your life. And people are very much conscious about literacy.

MB. So you need more books.

F. Earlier there was no such, things were there, now people are very much conscious, either girl or boy both wants to be literate.

MB. Will you pass your business on to your son?

F. Yes why not if he thinks if he does not involve in the service then he will come over here. Or either he can do the other business, but he has to come over here.

MB. Okay, that's it, thank you.

1. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Others

Transcript of an interview with Participants W and X

2 August 2000

MB. How long did you work on the Barabazar report?

X. I didn't do exactly on Barabazaar I did on north Calcutta Barabazaar is one of that area. I worked for six to eight months as I'm staying there I'm working on it. Being an architect if I stay there my thesis is still going on.

MB. Was there anybody else working on that report as well?

X. There's so many students working on that area, so many students from Calcutta, Jadavpur University and outside Calcutta

W. On the CRUTA report basically I will tell you the team, it was Debashis, Manish, and another gentleman called Rama Swami, Have you met him?

MB. No

W. I think you should meet him . . . I joined much later the binding was going on!

MB. Who commissioned the Report, who was the client?

W. The client was basically Calcutta Municipal Corporation, but they did not directly handle the project. They had given the responsibility to one organisation which is non-existent now. It is BTS - Building Technical Services. BTS had appointed CRUTA.

MB. Why wasn't the report implemented? (Kalyan Deb said that a construction company had built some buildings in Barabazaar that had collapsed)

Actually it was basically a study, it was not a study of some building collapse

MB. But did it have recommendations for what to do?

W. As he say that people come to Barabazaar study the area, they come to know that there are thousands of problems and they will have thousands of solutions for them, but things never get implemented on the ground.

On the CRUTA report I know personally that there were traffic improvement schemes, area development schemes. At the end of the report essentially it was a study. Ninety percent of the report talks about the history, the background, the socio-economic profile, all this stuff and ten percent it talks about *what should be done to improve Barabazaar. Among it were included* for example the River front, how to improve the river front, how to improve the area around the Satyanaran? Park. Some model lanes were identified. Proposals were floated as to how to improve those lanes. There were schemes for improvement of infrastructure. The problem was that these things cannot be implemented in isolation. It's a game The civic authority has to be taken into confidence. Who will want to implement it? Where will the fund come from? There are lots of facets to this

X. Basically it was a package. Now if you want to utilise that package there are so many things, so many factors, so many policy matters

MB. I got the impression that there was a contractor involved?

X. I know about one project it was a temple just opposite the Satyanayan Park. one regeneration job has been done by CRUTA it is just opposite to the Satyanayan Park in Barabazaar. The name of the temple is Satyanayan? Temple

W. there was some problem with the contractors so initially there was some hiccup. But ultimately it was done but not completed. But initially the purpose of the report was a study and some broad proposals

X.. Basically BTS belong to the Birlas and Birlas is basically from Barabazaar and so there might be that connection. They still have properties in Barabazaar.

2. FIELDWORK QUESTIONNAIRES

CHAPTER 6
HOUSING IN BARRA BAZAAR

QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Ownership

Do you own the house?

What will happen to the house when you die?

History of the house

How long have you and your family lived here?

Do you know the history of this house? How old is the house? Who built it?

How does the history of the house relate to your family history?

Family

Is the house occupied by your extended family?

Which family members live in the house?

family member	relationship	age	sex	occupation

How is the house divided up between extended family members?

Has the growth of the nuclear family affected this pattern - if so, when did it begin?

Do other family residents live nearby in Barra Bazaar?

Do other family residents live further away?

Do you have children? How old are they? What are they doing? Do they still live here? Are they at work or at school?

Day to day living

Describe a typical day in your house (e.g. the previous day)

Time	Activity
6.00 - 9.00 am	
9.00 - 12.00 pm	
12.00 - 3.00 pm	
3.00 - 6.00 pm	
6.00 - 9.00 pm	
9.00 - 12.00 am	

Where and at what times do the following activities take place through the day?

Activity	Location (floor)	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Night
eating					
washing					
sitting					
receiving family guests					
receiving business colleagues					
cooking					
work/study					
childcare					
prayer					
laundry					
sleeping					
storage					
recuperation					

Does activity in the house vary at different times of the year? (e.g., with different weather)

Which servants/ domestic helpers live in the house or out ?

servant/ domestic helper	age	sex	occupation	live in/ out

How do servants/ domestic helpers use the house?
Has the number of servants changed over time?

Possessions

How is the house furnished and fitted? European furniture or Indian?

Where are the following located:

Item	Location (floor and room)
record/ tape system	
fridge	
TV	
VCR	
CD player	
washing machine	
air conditioner	
car	
scooter	

Architecture of the house

Are there any special qualities or feature to the architecture?

What is your attitude to the architecture?

Courtyard(s)

How is/ are the courtyard(s) used?

Has this changed over time?

Changes to the house

Have there been changes/adaptations made to the house? (e.g., people, use, structure)

Have these reflected changing circumstances in the family?

Are there any changes you would like to make now?

Religion

Do you, or have you observed purdah in the house?

Are there shrines or rooms for prayer in the house - if so, where?

What festivals do you observe/ celebrate through the year, and how is the house decorated/ used?

Work

What work do you do? Is it nearby? Do you work from home?

Are the rest of the family involved in similar work?

Are there offices/ workspaces within the house?

Inner city living and the local neighbourhood

How many of your neighbours do you know?

What is the area like at night time?

Can you describe the changes you have seen in the street/ neighbourhood you live in, during your lifetime?

Activity	changes seen
building use	
new structures	
social life	
cultural activities	
crime and security	
availability of goods and services	
sanitation	
commercialisation of the market	
pollution	
traffic and congestion	
noise	

What do you consider to be the good and bad features of life in the town and out in the suburbs? What do you feel about living in one or the other?

features	comments
space	
convenience	
social life	
cultural activities	
crime	
security	
availability of goods and services	
work	
schools	
sanitation and health	
pollution	
health-care	
travel	
bye-laws	

What are the good and bad features of the houses in the town and the suburbs?

Others?

What would be the house of your dreams be like? Where would it be? Would it be a courtyard house with all the modern conveniences?

Questions on social position/ prestige in the neighbourhood??

CHAPTER 7
THE MARKETPLACE IN BARRA BAZAAR

QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Ownership

Do you own the business?
What work do you do?
Did you start the business - if so, why?
Do you have any other businesses?

History of the business

How long have you worked here?
Was your business passed down to you?
Do you know the history of your business?
Are the rest of the family involved in similar work?

Employees

How many people do you employ?

employee	relationship	age	sex	occupation

Day to day working

Describe a typical day in your work (e.g. the previous day)

Time	Activity
6.00 - 9.00 am	
9.00 - 12.00 pm	
12.00 - 3.00 pm	
3.00 - 6.00 pm	
6.00 - 9.00 pm	
9.00 - 12.00 pm	

Does work vary at different times of year?

Suppliers

Where do you get your goods from?

Why do you use certain suppliers and not others? Are they friends, family, business partners?

Customers

Why do customers come to you? Do they know you?

Where do your customers come from?(e.g., local Barabazaar, all over Calcutta, regional)

What methods do you use to attract new customers?

Networks and support

Are there trade alliances, trade guilds, chambers of commerce, wholesale organisations, etc.?

Do you belong to any? How are they organised?

How do banks, governments, local authorities encourage or obstruct your business?

Home and family

Is your home nearby in Barra Bazaar?

Do you live with your extended family?

Are you married?

Do you have children? How old are they? What are they doing?

Work and the local neighbourhood

How many of your neighbouring businesses do you know?

What is the area like at night?

Can you describe the changes you have seen in the street/ neighbourhood you work in, during your time working here?

Activity	Changes seen
building use	
new structures	
social life	
cultural activities	
crime and policing	
availability of goods and services	
sanitation	
commercialisation of the market	
pollution	
traffic and congestion	
noise	
street vendors/ hawkers	

Future of the business

What do you see as the future of your business?

Do you know what will happen to the business when you retire? Will your children inherit the business?

Do you have any strategies for increasing your competitiveness and/or for expansion?

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